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NO. 2 JULY 1998

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Gamesters' Republic

COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

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Gamers' Republic MANIFESTO

PUBLISHER'S
LOG 1.1



With the E3 in Atlanta, GA just two weeks away as we close our second issue, I can't help but wonder what revelations will transpire at this year's event. If the goings on in Japan are any indication, Sega may have their best show in years.

On May 20th through the 23rd, at the New Otani Hotel in Tokyo Japan, Sega of Japan will host "The Challenge conference" a three day seminar reserved for members of the press where they will finally unveil the company's much anticipated 64-bit console. All in-house Sega games will be available for play including the demo-disc currently being shown to display the system's prowess to developers. On day two, meetings will be held at Sega, including discussions with key Sega programmers such as Yuji-Naka and Yu Suzuki, and on day three, Warp will hold an event where they will unveil D3 for the new console. This means that the next issue of *GR* will likely contain screenshots of actual games running on the first CD based 64-bit game console. Sega of America will hopefully follow suit and at least wet our appetites in Atlanta. Exciting stuff indeed. We'll of course bring you the whole story along with an in-depth look at this year's big show in the August issue. In the mean time, enjoy the (new and improved) second issue of *Gamers' Republic*!

Dave Halverson

Glancing through this issue, all the staff at *The Republic* are hoping you'll notice the changes and tweaks made to our pages, the more comprehensive sports section, much more in-depth Japanese information and the lack of a letters page. Again. This is because we're finishing up our second issue before the first hits the stands, but we're more than ready to hear from you regarding how you feel about the magazine in general. The discussion is open. Pour your thoughts in!

I'd imagine however, that many of you have picked this issue up for one reason: The scoop on *Metal Gear Solid*. With the PlayStation soon becoming the least powerful console on the market, do owners of Sony's box of tricks (or indeed, prospective buyers) need to worry about being left out of the technological race? Of course not. With Konami set to deliver, Namco's System 12 *Soul Calibur* looking to be just the sort of outrageously deep fighting game just crying out to be converted, and a mammoth amount of software in the pipeline, the PlayStation may overheat and be the older timer on the block, but the quality games just keep on coming. Enjoy the issue. Game on...

David Hodgson

Gamers' Republic: (n.) 1. A magazine in which the supreme power rests on the body of the readership entitled to further their gaming knowledge, exercised by representatives chosen directly or indirectly by them.

2. Any body of persons viewed as a commonwealth of ultraistic and voracious video gamers.

3. A philosophical dialogue dealing with the composition and structure of the gaming genre and all subdivisions.

4. A monthly gaming publication encapsulating lavish presentation, entertaining prose and in-depth information on the subject of video and PC games.

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Gamers' Republic



cover story: METAL GEAR SOLID .24

AFTER AN EXTENDED PLAYTEST OF THE MOST ANTICIPATED PLAYSTATION GAME OF THE YEAR, WE WALK YOU THROUGH THE INITIAL LEVELS, DETAIL KEY CHARACTERS AND FINALLY INTERVIEW HIDEO KOJIMA, THE GAME'S CREATOR.

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THE SYSTEM 12 HARDWARE IS BEING PUSHED FURTHER AND FURTHER; NOW NAMCO HAVE THE FOLLOW UP TO SOUL BLADE ON TEST. WE REVEAL A NEW CHARACTER AND GAZE AT THE SPLENDOR OF THE GAME ENGINE. THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY NAMCO'S MOST ANTICIPATED PLAYSTATION PRODUCT...

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CD-ROM



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Warriors summons the vultures.

MORTAL 4 KOMBAT

Darkness is calling.

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FRONTLINES

AT THE CORE OF SEGA DEVELOPMENT

As we approach this year's E3, Sega is at the center of much speculation regarding the impending release of their next 'next generation' hardware...

Back in April 1998, Gamers' Republic visited the UK and did a marathon tour of the top British software houses. First off was a jaunt up to Derby, the home of Core Design. This Edwardian Manor House is where the fantastic *Tomb Raider* and equally flunkey *Fighting Force* were made. Steeped in a glittering past of 8 and 16 bit achievements as well as a couple of monster successes on the PlayStation, we chatted briefly with dual head honchos Jeremy and Adrian Smith before jogging round various interlocking corridors (*Resident Evil* 2 style). By far the most exciting news to report is that Core are most definitely working on a top secret Katana title, which we were privileged to play but not reveal the details about. Also aimed for high-end PCs, the game (which we couldn't comment on except to state that if you can fill in the blanks in the following hippie song title ("_____ Mushroom Man") you'll also know the name of the game) seemed to create a bizarre and tranquil euphoria on the entire Core staff when it was mentioned.

EIDOS HAS LICENSE TO PRINT MONEY

It came as no surprise to Gamers' Republic that Miss Croft's third installment of tomb raiding was also in the works, and despite being shown a demo of an early development version...

it looked to be more of what everyone seems to want; the same. However, Lara is going to have a number of newly accessible moves such as a crawl and a dash, and the actual layout of levels and the way through them is based more on the first game, in that the action is more puzzle-orientated rather than 'leaping-at-enemies-while-firing-both-pistols' orientated. Fans of effluent may be happy to learn that a portion of *Tomb Raider 3* also takes place in a sewer system underneath London (Core Design obviously checked out *Nightmare Creatures*), and Lara's new costumes include a figure-crushing black cat suit for her night-ly espionage frolics.

NO FIGHTING FARCE

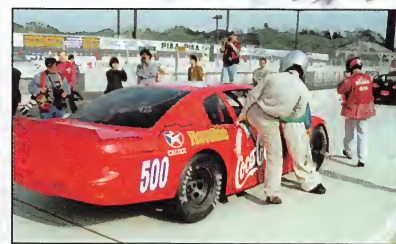
Fighting Force 2 is now well under way, and is promising to be so much more than the original title. Which really shouldn't be that hard...

It seemed that Core were not too happy with the original, and it received mediocre press to match. They are taking a much bigger, action-packed approach to the sequel, and so far, the models, graphics and environments are already making it look like something rather special. Also Nintendo owners can look forward (or indeed backwards) to owning the original *Fighting Force*, as the conversion for this is currently nearing completion. A shudder of fright was felt throughout GR offices the second this news hit...

OUT FOR THE DAYTONA

Sega continued their themed-based arcade promotion with a trip into the mountainous countryside outside Tokyo, where one of Japan's top racing circuits, Twin Ring Motegi, was located...

NASCAR specification stock cars were waiting to take reporters on exciting rides around the 1.5 mile oval course. Sure, the drivers kept the speeds down, but the pace was swift enough to effectively make their point - incredible G-Forces knocked the wide-eyed reporters back into their seats. If anyone even cared about the game after all the exciting pampering, *Daytona 2* was officially announced by Mr. Toshihiro Hagoshi. And it looked incredible. Shots next time...



SEGA
AM R&D DEPT.#2

NINTENDO LOWERS PRODUCTION COSTS

If anything good can be said about big business, it's that everyone wants their gluttonous piece of the action; God bless corporate America, and God bless competition...

Now that Sony is stealing Nintendo's thunder - 1998 figures shows the Playstation outselling the Nintendo 64 by as much as 3:1 - Nintendo is being forced to restructure their pricing policies in an attempt to pull sales back in their favor. Nintendo has been notorious in the past for gouging third party manufactures, and now that Sony has placed their noose of competition snugly around Nintendo's neck, the pressure is starting to soften manufacturing prices. In hopes of sending product to the consumer with the same average price point seen on current Playstation games, production costs will drop to \$19.95 for a 16MB cartridge. If third parties respond by passing on the savings to the consumer, there is no reason why future N64 games can't fall under the \$50 range. Unless these companies want to rake in cash...

IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A GAME..?

After being invited down to Titus for an early sneak peak at Superman in motion, we can give you an idea of what to expect from this winter title...



Superman 64 has you running (or flying) through 15 different levels, beating up bad guys and solving puzzles while trying to find the kryptonite diffusers in each level. Since Superman is

nearly invulnerable, damage from enemies is recorded as a lowering of your shielding to the kryptonite diffusers. If your shielding is lowered too far, or you don't find these machines fast enough, the green rock starts to take effect and the game is over.

What we saw was still very early but showed promise; the levels were well designed, you had the ability to pick up any object to use as a weapon, all of Superman's special abilities (eye lasers, freezing breath and the such) were there and it was complimented with a cool four-player battle mode - reminiscent of *StarFox* - that had you flying and battling around the skies of Metropolis. Look for a preview next month...



FRENCH SPACE CASES

French developers Infogrames, are very busy and have two definite games in the proverbial pipeline...

These are *Space Circus* and *Looney Toons Space Race*. Both titles are being developed for N64, and are shaping up to be real eye-openers. *Space Circus* is penciled in for a September launch in the UK, and *Looney Toons* for Spring '99.



EUROPE AROUSED BY GB CAMERA

In an interesting move, Nintendo have announced the European release of their mighty strange Pocket Camera for the GameBoy. Previously thought to be only strange...

...enough for the gimmick-oriented Japanese gamers' market, it seems as though this new aperture-related pastime has caught the eye of GB owners all over the world. Currently available through numerous importers, the camera (\$95, £70), the printer (\$80, £65) and even the little rolls of heat-sensitive paper (\$16, £12) are being snapped up by the hundreds in a frenzy similar to the recent *Tamagotchi* fervor. Released later in the spring in the UK and the rest of Europe, the whole lot can be yours for the meager pittance of £100 (\$130 plus shipping). No news on whether the lumbering Nintendo of America sees this as a wise move for US punters. Of course, our humble opinion, we'd prefer actual games to play...



Nintendo is aiming for the younger demographic with the Pocket Camera. Hence the cute character with the pencil. How strange.

ENIX CONTEST

Your imagination, your creativity, your most scrupulous artistry laid out for countless numbers of people to share - what a rewarding experience designing a game would be. Add \$200,000 to that rewarding feeling, and you'd be in the shoes of Andrei 'Krank' Kouzmine of Russia, the grand prize winner of the Enix Game Software Contest II.

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS REQUIRE SUPPORT

There's no doubt that the latest Crystal Dynamics PlayStation games are visually impressive, so it comes as little surprise when the company recently announced that the PC versions of *Gex 2*, *Akuji*, *Unholy War* and *Kain 2* will all require 3DFX-compatible boards to run (although other hardware accelerators are being considered). All of these titles will be straight conversions, so aside from a higher frame rate and resolution, there's little reason to pursue these versions if you already have their PlayStation counterparts. On the other hand, PC owners that have yet to experience these games should certainly take a closer look...

DMA SET TO HARVEST

Up in the wilds of Scotland, developers DMA have made significant advancements with their two N64 titles, *Body Harvest* and *Silicon Valley*. Both titles have suffered many long and difficult setbacks (indeed, these games were part of the original lineup for the N64's release), but at last, Nintendo seem happy with them. We'll track these elderly titles down and see what the final, final beta versions play and look like in our E3 coverage next time...



PSYGNOSIS SETS E3 ABLAZE

Psygnosis are planning to set the gaming world on fire at E3 when they unveil their first U.S.-produced PC CD-ROM title, *DRAKAN*...

Developed by Surreal Software and to be published by Psygnosis, *Drakan* is a third-person perspective game that looks to be a blend of *Tomb Raider*'s exploration and puzzle-solving, with the epic *Panzer Dragoon*'s flight mechanics and theme.



Drakan will feature unrestrained 3D worlds that are not plagued by the nagging loading times that so often blemish such games. Particularly, the transitions between indoor and outdoor environments will be completely seamless, which should provide a heightened degree of immersion for the player.

And in what is becoming an all-too-familiar pattern in games these days (thanks to Lara Croft), *Drakan*'s protagonist will be a particularly tough shapely heroine,

Rynn. Convincingly bringing Rynn to life, roughly 150 animations will be utilized to portray her various movements. But perhaps stealing the limelight will be her cohort: a rather large fire-breathing dragon, Arokh. With his ability to burn knights and perform some truly outrageous acrobatics, we are expecting to experience some pretty intense stomach-turning scenes when we give this one a go at E3. Check back next month for more tidbits.



Evoking the spirit of *Magic Carpet* and *Tomb Raider* comes a similarly charged adventure. Plus points include a shapely vixen with huge 'bajubblies' for the gentlemen, and a large fire-belching lizard for the D&D freaks. We're hoping *Deathtrap Dungeon* isn't the inspiration...

DRAGON QUEST VII DELAY

Here's some bad news for fans of *Dragon Quest* who have been anxiously awaiting the seventh chapter in the series. Enix announced at a recent press conference that it would be delaying the release...

...of *Dragon Quest VII* from its original date, summer '98, to next year some time. They claim that the groundwork and conceptualizing was far more taxing than the development team had planned, and that actual hands-on game development of the title has been seriously delayed. The company confidently claims, however, that the game will be "twice as interesting" as any previous *Dragon Quest*. Sources have also speculated that the game is now being developed for Sega's new system and the PS simultaneously. This would perhaps add a modicum of credence to the delay.

FINAL FANTASY VIII IN '98

Hot on the heels of the disappointing *Dragon Quest VII* news, Square has made an official announcement regarding the release of *Final Fantasy VIII*...

They expect to launch this flagship title before the end of this year, although they hinted that it might well slip to March '99 (by the end of their fiscal year). Literally a day after we go to press, Square will be holding a press conference where they will be explaining the announcement and perhaps displaying the game for the first time ever. After selling over 3.5 million units of *FFVII* and earning accolades throughout the industry, *FFVIII* could be one of their biggest titles ever. With news of the *Dragon Quest* postponement, Square is suddenly in an extremely advantageous position. We'll probably have more to show on *Final Fantasy VIII* after E3.



TITUS TO TOMB RAID WITH BLUES BROTHERS

From the UK arm of Titus come *Roadsters '98* (an all new racing game featuring Mercedes, BMWs, Porsches and Mazdas being taken for clutch crunching racing), and then arrives *Blues Brothers 2000*. It takes on the form of a *Tomb Raider*-style game but lets hope the game is significantly better than the poxy film. We have low expectations for this one, but hope to be pleasantly surprised this October when Jake and Elwood try to fill Lara's tank-top and butt-hugging shorts.

BULLFROG MEMBERS LEAP

British developers, Mucky Foot, are currently working on a dark, futuristic 2000AD-type platform/beat-em-up entitled *City of the Fallen*. The team is comprised of six ex-Bullfrog (*Syndicate Wars*, *Magic Carpet*, *Dungeon Keeper* etc.) members, and the game has been in development for around six months now. The PlayStation and PC versions are currently the only ones being worked on.

GODZILLA INVADES

Standing 30 inches tall this Remote controlled Godzilla (circa 1954) ranks as one of the coolest RC toys ever, especially in the wake of Godzilla fever...

Of course you'll have to travel to Japan to nab one, unless you have a neighborhood importer or comic shop with Japanese connections. The price of 30,000 yen (about \$265 US) doesn't seem like much given the sophistication of the device. The soft outer skin (which velcros shut down the spine) wraps around detailed mechanical armature providing realistic animation and a movie quality look. Four D-Batteries provide Godzilla with power for walking, turning, head waving, tail swinging, and the famous Godzilla bark. Godzilla is Manufactured by Tokyo Marui Co. Ltd. and available now in finer Japanese hobby shops.



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ATLUS

SEGA'S ORIGINAL PC GAME CAUSES CONFLICT

Sega's internal PC division, which up until now has been known for little more than converting popular Sega arcade titles to PC, has recently announced their first original title...

Even though the computer market is saturated with real-time strategy titles, *Conflict of Nations* is bursting with so many unique ideas and fun-sounding multi-player aspects, it requires a second look.

With gameplay comparable to *Command & Conquer*, you use drag-and-click control to send troops into the fray, build structures to advance your civilization and manage over eight different types of resources. *Conflict of Nations* sets itself apart from similar sounding games by implementing tons of new features, many of which seem to revolve around an involving hierarchy system outfitted with tons of black humor. Apparently designed with multi-player games in mind, *Conflict* focuses on team-play and allows members to take on different roles (each would be responsible for a distinct aspect of the civilization), which leads us to the fun. Espionage, betrayal and other groovy aspects that plagued classic hierarchies runs rampant here, giving you a game where you can sell-out your friends to the highest bidder (or even preform a coup against your leader with fellow team mates), while battling the enemy on the front lines. *Conflict of Nations* is an incredibly fun-sounding and ambitious title, we can only hope the game lives up to what the developers intend to produce.



FROM SOFTWARE WITH LOVE

Underrated Japanese development house From Software have begun showing two new titles, one original and one that bears a passing...

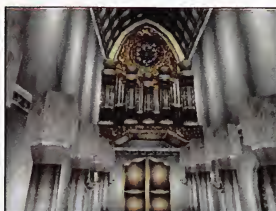
...thematic resemblance to the *King's Field* series. American gamers would probably be familiar with From's *King's Field II* and the impressive mech combat game, *Armored Core*.

The first of From's new games is *Echo Night*, a fully real time 3D adventure. Set aboard a sea going luxury liner that has been missing for the last 24 years, it's your task to solve the mystery of its disappearance and discover its connection with the wealthy Rockwell family. How odd. You'll also encounter the lingering souls of people left on the ship since the mysterious 'incident' occurred 24 years ago. From Software's objective

in designing the game was to create a pure adventure that required problem-solving skills and to reproduce a realistic environment. To that end, they have designed the ship's cabins to mirror those of actual luxury liners and introduced elements of gameplay that are only triggered during certain times of the day. *Echo Night* also relies heavily on the concept of time travel, with clues dispersed throughout different time periods that must be used to return you to your own world.

Next is *Shadow Tower*, dubbed a 3D Dungeon RPG by From. Here, you must retrieve the souls of the local townsfolk from the so-called Shadow Tower. This is accomplished by defeating the enemies within, with the number of rescued souls directly related to how many enemies are vanquished. There are about thirty levels to the Tower, but you'll have no map to guide you on your quest. You descend from the collapsed entrance and make your way down through the real-time 3D dungeons. Your character can carry up to eleven different weapons, all easily accessible with the press of a button. Within the dungeon are 150 unique monster types, with the entire Tower populated with roughly 500 creatures. Any monster that you fight and successfully beat can be saved to a memory card, enabling one of the more novel features of the game, Creature Battle. Two players can have one-on-one or three-on-three battles with saved monsters, with the victor

receiving items from the fallen opponent. Neat! Both titles are expected this summer in Japan.



POTTY MOUTH

Cystal Dynamic's *Gex: Enter the Gecko* involved the exploits of a wacky reptile...

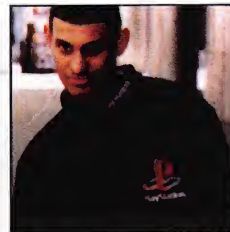
... with an overabundance of 'kerazy' phrases, courtesy of the almost well-known comedian, Dana Gould. Not so in the United Kingdom, where the British institution known as Leslie Philips was employed of all lizard speak. This elderly royster-doysterer has graced television screens in a host of 'straight to A&E Channel' epics, but he's best known in his portrayal of oversexed patients and gruff stiff upper-lip military types in the *Carry On* films (very British 1960s comedy in the style of *Austin Powers*) back when his moustache was freshly waxed and his devious sparkle had the ladies flocking. Now however, he's been wheeled out of retirement and forced to croon various murmurings to delight British punters in a way Dana never could. Except in our beta version of the game, Leslie's more risqué phrases were left in, including the empassioned "I f**king well died, you c**t!" in a suitably plummy tone. Our tender ears imploded when we heard that one, but thankfully for Little Jimmy, such foul narration will definitely be cut for the final game.



THE PRINCE'S NAZ-T-ERGHIEZ!

One is a diminutive Boxer from the United Kingdom called Prince Naseem. The other is a not-so diminutive Kick-boxer from the United Kingdom called Prince Naseem.

Coincidence? We think not. One appears in Dream Factory's new fighting championship seeking stronger opponents and a greater challenge. The other appears on HBO in their fighting championship seeking stronger opponents and more time to dance before he battles. They're both cocky, they're both powerful, and one of them's the best thing to come out of Sheffield since steel forks. One of them has endorsed the Sony PlayStation in the UK. The other is set to fight another pugilist by the name of Ken Mishima, who bears a striking resemblance to fighters from another famous video game family (look, we realize that naming beat-'em-up stars is a difficult process because all the cool names are gone, but Ken Mishima?! How about Ryu Ginrey and Blanka Wulong while you're at it, eh?). They both look rather similar. Let's hope the real Naz takes this character as a compliment; one of our staff has actually met the Sheffield brawler and assures us that the Prince is more than capable of biting the kneecaps of any that dare mock his homunculan form...



THUMBS UP, GAMERS!

Firstly, we thought these were dwarven posing pouches, but on closer inspection, these Game Gloves appear to cure gamers of all problems...

...associated with Gamer's Thumb, a skin affliction terrorizing video gamers throughout the US. You know the problem; you've just bought yourself Tekken 3 and a new PS pad. You plug in and play a little Paul Phoenix, and the next thing you know, small portions of your thumb lie shredded on the floor. Previously, the alternative was playing with a plaster and wishing the Saturn pad would be released for the PlayStation, or else covering your d-pad with watery pus. Well no more! MD Industries have thought long and hard and invented this device which straps around your thumb, allowing all the ease of accessing moves, but none of the blister-forming nastiness. Approved by Neurologist David Weisher, you may look laughably silly, but your thumbs will thank you for the Game Glove in the end...



CONSPIRACY THEORY #1 HARDER IS BETTER

For the longest time the American public have been lead to believe that the reason why numerous Japanese titles are made 'tougher' for their American release (e.g. continues are limited or hard becomes default difficulty) is simply because American gamers are better at games than their Japanese brethren. Of course, as anyone who's ever been to Japan will testify, this is simply not the case. So why the increased difficulty? One word: 'Rental'. The game rental business is so large in North America that publishers have to make sure their game can stand up to the one night challenge, or else the renter won't consider buying or hiring it again afterwards. In Japan this isn't a problem. The Japanese don't believe you have truly finished a game until you have mastered it. But for most American gamers, once those end credits roll, the game goes back in the box. Sad but true.

A RARE VISIT INDEED

Fortress Rare was invaded by a crack team of Republic staff. We sat down in extremely low-roofed offices in rural Twycross...

...to discuss all future plans with Simon Farmer, Production Manager for all matters fabled. Dodging the inevitable barrage of "How's Killer Instinct Platinum and Donkey Kong 64?" questions, the only real information we garnered before our 'departure' was called, was that Conkers' Quest would be playable at E3, and the secretive 'Goldeneye engine' game probably won't have anything to do with 007 whatsoever. Pressing the subject, our reporter remembered feeling dizzy, and woke to find himself lying face down in a field near some cows. Fortress Rare's secrets remain unobtainable...

PICK A CHOO!

Always with Pikachu... anytime and anywhere. This little gadget is a pedometer using the all time popular animation character called Pikachu...

When you walk, it walks. The more you walk, the smarter it will become. By walking, you can accumulate electricity, measured in watts to give to this Tamagotchi on steroids. These watts can increase the bond between you and Pikachu. By doing so, Pikachu will show you more amiable gestures. Or you can bet the accumulated electricity on the slot machine, which can increase your total watts a hundred fold. How sweet.



RESIDENT EVIL 3... MILLION!!

The time? 5.30 p.m. on Friday 17th April. The place? The luxurious New Otani Hotel in Tokyo. The event? The Biohazard party...

...where very expensive and incredibly small food was served up on neatly arranged plates and the success of Biohazard/Resident Evil 2 was toasted. The sales in Japan and America have now topped the three million mark, and Capcom's President, Mr. Tsujimoto was more than a little chuffed with the result. Sega and Sony were also wooing, sending their own presidents to barter for the rights to RE3 on their console. After this pleasant chat, guests were invited to the 'Crane Room' where a delectable buffet was served, and Rockman cakes were eaten. We also made off with a t-shirt and a set of limited edition phone cards as a thank you present. Any takers?



Resident Evil 2, known as Resident Evil 3 in overseas, has sold through more than 3 million units since its release (1.1 million units in Japan and 1 million units in the USA).

Top 10 Nintendo 64 Titles

1. **Yoshi's Story**
Nintendo of America
2. **Goldeneye 007**
Nintendo of America
3. **Mario Kart 64**
Nintendo of America
4. **Super Mario 64**
Nintendo of America
5. **WCW vs. NWO: World Tour**
THQ
6. **Diddy Kong Racing**
Nintendo of America
7. **Wave Race 64**
Nintendo of America
8. **Star Fox 64 with Rumble Pak**
Nintendo of America
9. **1080° Snowboarding**
Nintendo of America
10. **Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire**
Nintendo of America

Top 10 PlayStation Titles

1. **Resident Evil 2**
Capcom
2. **Triple Play '99**
Electronic Arts
3. **Crash Bandicoot**
Sony Computer Entertainment
4. **NBA Shootout '98**
Sony Computer Entertainment
5. **WCW Nitro**
THQ
6. **March Madness '98**
Electronic Arts
7. **NASCAR '98**
Electronic Arts
8. **Tomb Raider**
Eidos
9. **NBA Live '98**
Electronic Arts
10. **Twisted Metal**
Sony Computer Entertainment

Top 10 Saturn Titles

1. **NBA Live '98**
Electronic Arts
2. **NASCAR '98**
Electronic Arts
3. **Mansion of Hidden Souls**
Sega of America
4. **Astal**
Sega of America
5. **Street Fighter the Movie**
Acclaim Entertainment
6. **Battle Arena Toshinden Ura**
Sega of America
7. **Bust a Move 2**
Acclaim Entertainment
8. **Battle Monsters**
Acclaim Entertainment
9. **Clockwork Knight**
Sega of America
10. **Blackfire**
Sega of America

Top 10 Overall Console Titles

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Yoshi's Story
<i>Nintendo of America</i> | N64 |
| 2. Goldeneye 007
<i>Nintendo of America</i> | N64 |
| 3. Resident Evil 2
<i>Capcom</i> | PS |
| 4. Triple Play '99
<i>Electronic Arts</i> | PS |
| 5. Crash Bandicoot
<i>Sony Computer Entertainment</i> | PS |
| 6. NBA Shootout
<i>Sony Computer Entertainment</i> | PS |
| 7. WCW Nitro
<i>THQ</i> | PS |
| 8. Mario Kart 64
<i>Nintendo of America</i> | N64 |
| 9. Super Mario 64
<i>Nintendo of America</i> | N64 |
| 10. March Madness '98
<i>Electronic Arts</i> | PSX |

database

Welcome to our newly expanded chart section. As you can see, we've five charts compiled from TRSTS data across the United States, showing what you're buying for the month of March, by far the most accurate way of discerning exactly what Americans are buying. Of course, we also want to know what folk in other continents are buying, so we're including top tens from Japan and the United Kingdom. The results are surprising: the Saturn still holds strong in Japan, while the PlayStation rules the British market. Americans, meanwhile, are content to shell out the bucks for Nintendo's box of 64bit tricks. As for Computer titles? Well, the less said about *Deer Hunter*, the better...

Top 10 Computer Software Titles

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Deer Hunter
<i>Wizardworks</i> | PC |
| 2. Deer Hunter: extended season
<i>Wizardworks</i> | PC |
| 3. Starcraft
<i>Sierra On-Line</i> | PC |
| 4. Myst
<i>Broderbund</i> | PC |
| 5. Titanic: Journey Out of Time
<i>Cyberflix</i> | PC/MAC |
| 6. Star Wars Rebellion
<i>LucasArts Entertainment</i> | PC |
| 7. Trophy Bass
<i>Sierra Sports</i> | PC |
| 8. Wheel of Fortune
<i>Imagesoft</i> | PC |
| 9. Cabela's Big Game Hunter
<i>Head Games</i> | PC |
| 10. MS Flight Simulator 98
<i>Microsoft</i> | PC/NT |

Top 10 United Kindom Titles

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Gran Turismo
<i>Sony</i> | PS |
| 2. Resident Evil 2
<i>Virgin/Capcom</i> | PS |
| 3. FIFA: RTWC '98
<i>Electronic Arts</i> | PS |
| 4. Three Lions
<i>Take 2</i> | PS |
| 5. Goldeneye 007
<i>Nintendo</i> | N64 |
| 6. Grand Theft Auto
<i>Take 2</i> | PC |
| 7. Mystical Ninja
<i>Konami</i> | N64 |
| 8. V-Rally
<i>Ocean</i> | PS |
| 9. Yoshi's Story
<i>Nintendo</i> | N64 |
| 10. Croc
<i>Electronic Arts</i> | PS |

Top 10 Japanese Titles

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. World Stadium
<i>Konami</i> | PS |
| 2. Super Robot Wars F
<i>Banpresto</i> | SS |
| 3. Tekken 3
<i>Namco</i> | PS |
| 4. Parasite Eve
<i>Squaresoft</i> | PS |
| 5. Shining Force 3
<i>Sega</i> | SS |
| 6. Gran Turismo
<i>Sony</i> | PS |
| 7. Bomberman Hero
<i>Hudson</i> | N64 |
| 8. Gundam
<i>Bandai</i> | PS |
| 9. Vampire Savior
<i>Capcom</i> | SS |
| 10. Sakura War 2
<i>Sega</i> | SS |

Editor's Top 10: Dave Halverson

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Quest 64 | N64 |
| 2. Tail Concerto (import) | PS |
| 3. Tomba (import) | PS |
| 4. Panzer Dragoon Saga | SS |
| 5. Mystical Ninja | N64 |
| 6. G Darius | PS |
| 7. Dark Earth | PC |
| 8. Silhouette Mirage (import) | SS |
| 9. Forsaken | PC |
| 10. Vectorman 2 | Genesis |

Editor's Top 10: Brady Fiechter

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Tekken 3 | PS |
| 2. Klonoa | PS |
| 3. Panzer Dragoon Saga | SS |
| 4. World Cup '98 | PC/N64/PS |
| 5. Shining Force 3 | SS |
| 6. Quake 2 | PC |
| 7. Vigilante 8 | PS |
| 8. Gran Turismo | PS |
| 9. Sanitarium | PS |
| 10. Tail Concerto (import) | PS |

Editor's Top 10: Mike Griffin

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Vigilante 8 | PS |
| 2. Shining Force 3: part 2 (import) | PS |
| 3. Tail Concerto | PS |
| 4. Ehrgeiz | arcade |
| 5. Panzer Dragoon Saga | SS |
| 6. N2O | PS |
| 7. Gun Griffon 2 (import) | SS |
| 8. Sega Rally 2 | arcade |
| 9. Off-Beat Racer! | arcade |
| 10. World Cup '98 | PC/N64/PS |

Gamers' Republic Top 10 List

Here are the games that we consider the cream of the crop. Purchase on sight!

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| 1. Quake 2 | PC |
| 2. Panzer Dragoon Saga | SS |
| 3. Tail Concerto (import) | PS |
| 4. Sanitarium | PC |
| 5. Tekken 3 | PS |
| 6. Klonoa | PS |
| 7. N2o | PS |
| 8. Ehrgeiz | arcade |
| 9. Starcraft | PC |
| 10. Shining Force 3 | SS |

**Editor's Top 10: Mike Hobbs**

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| 1. Ehrgeiz | arcade |
| 2. Tail Concerto (import) | PSX |
| 3. Quake 2 | PC |
| 4. Rally 2 | arcade |
| 5. Klonoa | PSX |
| 6. Descent: Freespace | PC |
| 7. Tekken 3 | PSX |
| 8. Hot Shots Golf | PSX |
| 9. N2O | PSX |
| 10. Vigilante 8 | PSX |

Editor's Top 10: David Hodgson

- | | |
|----------------------|--------|
| 1. Quake 2 | PC |
| 2. Tekken 3 | PS |
| 3. Soul Calibur | arcade |
| 4. Sanitarium | PC |
| 5. Time Crisis | arcade |
| 6. N2o | PS |
| 7. Redline Racer | PC |
| 8. Gran Turismo | PS |
| 9. 1080 Snowboarding | N64 |
| 10. Vampire Savior | SS |

Editor's Top 10: Dave Rees

- | | |
|------------------------|----|
| 1. Sanatarium | PC |
| 2. Quake 2 | PC |
| 3. Panzer Dragoon Saga | SS |
| 4. Descent: Freespace | PC |
| 5. N2O | PS |
| 6. Starcraft | PC |
| 7. Army Men | PC |
| 8. Myth | PC |
| 9. Forsaken | PC |
| 10. G Darius (import) | PS |

Editor's Top 10: Ryan Lockhart

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| 1. Starcraft | PC |
| 2. Quake 2 | PC |
| 3. Klonoa | PS |
| 4. Blade Runner | PC |
| 5. Burning Rangers | SS |
| 6. Sanatarium | PC |
| 7. Gun Griffon 2 (import) | SS |
| 8. Panzer Dragoon Saga | SS |
| 9. Interstate '76 Nitro Pack | PC |
| 10. Yellow Brick Road (import) | SS |

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WILL PUT YOU IN A DUST PAN.



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TECH FRONT

Having given a brief introduction to methods of 3D rendering in last month's column, this month is a glossary of some more advanced graphics terms which you've probably seen mentioned from time to time, and wondered what they meant, and why you should care. These are not in alphabetical order, since some of them are fairly closely related.

BY BRIAN OSSERMAN

Z-BUFFER: A method of keeping track of when a given object should be drawn over what is already on the screen. Every pixel is assigned a depth value which measures the 'distance' to the closest object in that direction which has already been drawn (the actual numbers stored aren't quite the distance, to make computations quicker, but it works as if they were). When each object is drawn, its distance at each pixel is compared to the distance stored in the z-buffer; if the object is closer, it is drawn (and the z-buffer is updated), and if not, there is some closer object in the same direction, so the new one is blocked and should not be drawn.

CLIPPING: The process of dealing with polygons which are only partially on the screen. Relatively simple to do as long as the polygon isn't partly behind the viewer, but more complicated otherwise (for instance, the wall of a long tunnel might be partly visible but partly behind the viewer). One approach that works in general is to break the polygon up into one polygon which is entirely in front of the viewer (but could be partly off to the side, so it might not be entirely within view), and another polygon which is entirely out of view (and can therefore be ignored).

ALPHA BLENDING: The most common method of rendering transparent objects. Every pixel is assigned an 'alpha value' from 0 to 1, which determines how transparent the pixel is: 0 is completely transparent and 1 is completely opaque. When an object is drawn, each pixel is colored with a combination of the original color and the new object's color depending on the alpha values at that pixel. 32-bit RGBA color depth means that each pixel has 24 bits for the color value (RGB) and an additional 8 bits for the alpha.

BUMP MAPPING: Makes polygons appear somewhat bumpy by allowing different parts of a given polygon to be lit as if they were facing in different directions. Too costly for the current

generation of games, but the newest 3-D accelerator cards and the next generation of consoles may make it more common.

DIFFUSE LIGHTING: The lighting on an object that simply takes into account how much light hits it (and at what angle) and not what direction the light is coming from (or what direction the view is from). What is generally meant when one refers to lighting effects or light sourcing in games, as opposed to specular lighting.

SPECULAR LIGHTING/REFLECTIONS:

Specular lighting is simply lighting that takes the direction of incoming and outgoing light into effect, otherwise known as reflections. Although rendering general reflections of objects off of one another is too difficult to do in real time, it is feasible to make individual polygons look like mirrors (although even this takes a substantial amount of additional computing time). Other feasible special cases of reflections include environment mapping and specular highlights.

ENVIRONMENT MAPPING: A way of faking reflections of the surrounding scenery on an object moving in a very limited area. A sort of 360 degree picture of the surroundings is computed beforehand from the point of view of the object, and then appropriate parts of that picture are used as textures on the different parts of the object to make it appear to reflect.

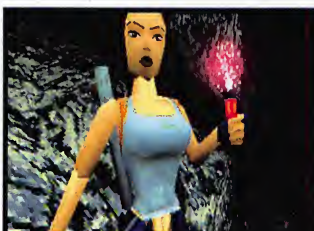
SPECULAR HIGHLIGHTS: The highlights that lights produce when reflecting off an object. One of the primary strengths of phong shading, but can be faked to a certain extent with less effort. One possibility (implemented by GL) would be to use phong shading to calculate the lighting at each vertex of a triangle, and then gouraud shade the triangle. This would catch any highlights that contain at least one vertex of some triangle, but they would be shaped somewhat incorrectly, and any highlights contained entirely inside triangles would be missed completely.

CLIPPING, MAPPING, SPECULARITY, BLENDING, SHADING... SO MANY TERMS, SO MUCH CONFUSION... UNTIL NOW
THIS MONTH: A GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS



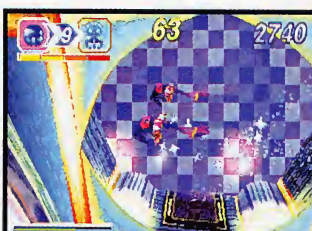
ALPHA TRANSPARENCY

Everyone remembers the fish boss from Panzer Dragoon Zwei, and the amazing water effects surrounding the platform. This is an ingenious usage of an alpha transparency, especially on a system without built-in hardware transparency options (only background transparencies).



DIFFUSE LIGHTING

Here we have Lara holding a flare in Tomb Raider 2. As you can see, the light is calculated at each vertex of the triangle on this model, from the point of view of Lara. The incoming light source (the flare) is taken into account and the effect is shaped correctly over the model.



REAL-TIME REFLECTIONS

The Sound Museum level in Sonic Team's Nights offers a great example of reflection effects. They successfully 'fake' the reflection by rendering individual polygons over a mirror effect, requiring oodles of processing. Not many developers can achieve such a true effect on the Saturn.



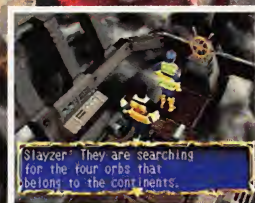
ENVIRONMENT MAPPING

Sonic's metal 'loading' head in Sonic R is a good, if somewhat understated example of environment mapping. First, a 360 degree image of the first level is calculated from various angles, and then parts of these images are mapped onto the polygonal Sonic head as cycling textures.

Brian Osserman is a third year student at Harvard University studying mathematics and computer science, and has been playing video games and programming for as long as he can remember, starting with Logo on an Atari 800 in 1st grade.

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a day in the life

Our first D.I.L. File probes into one of Ritual Entertainment's finest level designers, Tom Mustaine. Tom is a 21-year-old Level/Game Designer at Ritual Entertainment and has worked fervently on such titles as Master Levels for Doom2, Final Doom, Hell 2 Pay, Perdition's Gate, and Scourge of Armagon. He has been playing games since Pong and played his way through all the Commodore computers, every mutation of Nintendo console, and just about anything else that could be played. Right now he is working hard on Ritual's first full title, Sin.

day in the life

Creating *Sin* levels has been a unique, interesting, and informative journey. For the past year I have striven to pull away from the level design standards of most first-person shooters, working hard to create levels that are more authentic in nature and less of a departure from reality. We have put tons of time into researching *Sin* levels, studying real life places and trying to create the same awe-inspiring locations that one would get from traveling to such a place in the real world.

I try to create my levels in many unique ways. The first thing I try to do when starting a new level is brainstorm ideas. With *Sin* levels, we knew from day one what each level would be; no more random architecture and unrecognizable locations. Sure, all of the environments we are creating are totally original, but we have made a serious effort to keep things rooted within a possible reality. After the brainstorming phase comes the research. One thing that consumes a lot of my pre-level design time is the research phase. If the environment I am creating has a parallel in real life, loads of research is in order. For example, a real metalworking factory has loads of interesting machinery, hazards, complex architecture, and unique settings. Despite the fact that such a layout would probably be less than exciting in a game, the ideas that are spawned from the research phase helps to create not only an incredibly interesting level with loads of eye candy, but helps make the experience seem more authentic. After the research phase comes the paper design. Sitting down with a plethora of information about the environment that I want to create, along with my initial design ideas, the flow can then be fleshed out. To me, the flow is absolutely the most important aspect of a single player level. Making sure that the player is never bored, never having to backtrack too much, and always on edge, never knowing what's going to jump out at them next. This is the part of design I love to spend the most time on. Focusing on making every single aspect of an environment fit together, finding ways to intertwine each piece of the puzzle, and making sure things flow correctly. All of these are important elements in the process of designing levels and none must be overlooked or rushed.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the incredible people that work here at Ritual. Running ahead with our past experiences in hand, we took the right steps when determining how to go about the creative process of each part of the game. Two of the most impressive features that have helped to make my job easier came from the hands of our talented programmers. The first, Scripting, was implemented

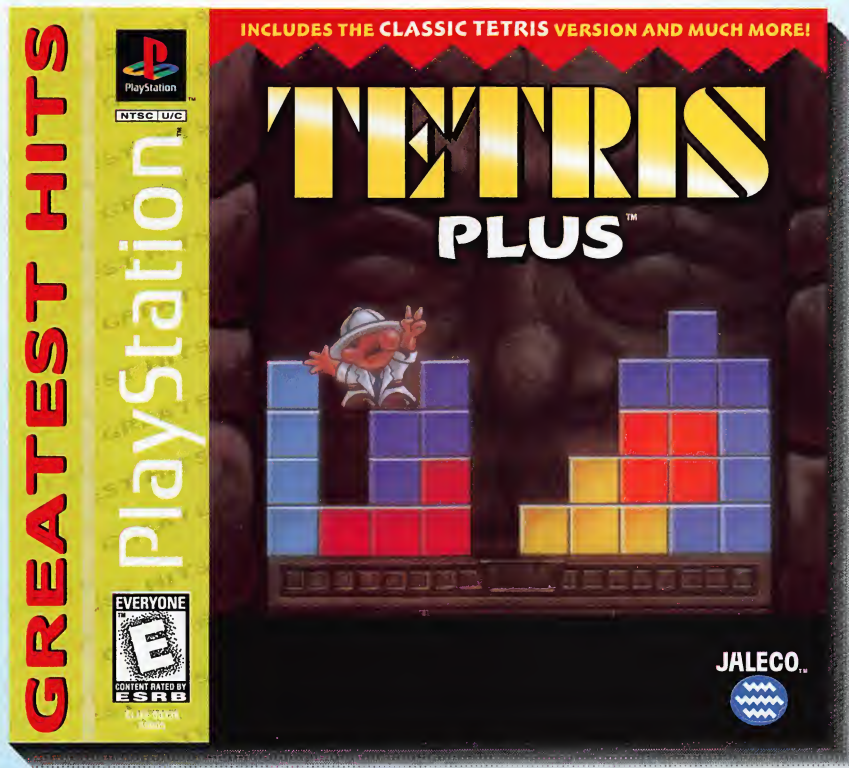


early in the project and allowed for us as level designers to create the most complex machinery in a first-person game to date. It also helped to lay out character interactions, set up unique scenes, and control the overall flow of the entire game with a logic system that allows for unlimited possibilities. The second was the level editor. Many features were added to almost every aspect of the editor, keeping us from spending days on a simple task that is now taken care of by few simple clicks. On top of all of this, none of this would be possible without the awesome talents of our artists. After the initial design phase was complete and all the levels were decided upon, the artists here began to create the textures that would actually become our environments. They helped us mold each level into the unique environments that you'll experience when you play the game (*Sin*). Each area is totally different and has a completely unique feeling than any other level. You'll be amazed.

Every aspect outlined here has helped to make *Sin* the incredible game it has become. I will carry many of the level design philosophies that we've used in *Sin* over into our next games. With the time to pre-design and prepare, we'll continue to make exciting and fun games for you to play.

Tom Mustaine
Mustaine@ritual.com
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On Wednesday 6th May, Konami of America granted Gamers' Republic an audience to playtest the most anticipated (and hyped) game of 1998. This is a game that some say creates a whole new genre. This could be the last great PlayStation game before Sony's next super console appears. The excitement over *MGS* in the States has superseded the normal fanatical fervor for this title in Japan, which is no mean feat. Well, if my eight hours handling the exploits of Mister Snake and his stealth shuffling, intense hand-to-hand combat and go-anywhere gameplay are anything to go by, then this frenzy is more than appropriate for a game of this distinction. From an in-depth delve into the first two initial levels, a look at some of the later stages and a talk with the creator of the game itself, PlayStation owners may have to be pacified after this feature; you have much to be delirious about...

I'll start by taking you through the introduction, which features Solid Snake, a mini-submarine and a spot of underwater altercation in the freezing Alaskan waters. The entire cut-scene runs in real-time (as indeed, are all cut-scenes in the game; a decision made to keep the whole experience on the same 'level' of reality and to remove loading times altogether), and features Solid Snake in his one-man sub receiving a torpedo of the exploding kind. The escape hatch is unlocked and Solid Snake writhes out of his submersible amid a cascade of ascending bubbles (note that this real-time intro also features pulsing water effects for the entire screen). Rising up through the depths with a perfectly motioned swim, Solid Snake surfaces in an underground cavern. Cue ripples in the dark green water. Looking about, Solid Snake notes a couple of white-suited guards, lifts himself up and onto the concrete floor edge of

The future of gaming is solid!

Join us as we storm an Alaskan Base... snake style!



Stealth infiltration in effect. Sneak past dozing guards or fight! Your choice!



Solid Snake comes under heavy fire from an enemy submarine in Metal Gear Solid's introduction. Graphical effects of this real-time masterpiece include screen warping when water or explosions are shown, and a special cinematic strip to differentiate between the intro and actual gameplay.

More intro action is revealed. Solid Snake under fire!!



Former Foxhound operatives are called upon to halt the progress of Liquid Snake and his splinter faction!



the storage area and carefully removes his scuba flippers. Now the game begins. Rising to his feet, he steps to a large storage box and slowly sidles right. Two heavy chains sway slightly in the cold breeze. Solid Snake's breath crystallizes as he steps to the corner, and the camera pans round to reveal a guard stretching. The guard then stops, turns and resumes patrol. Crawling under the storage box, Solid Snake ignores the two rats scurrying about and heads for another container. The infiltration of the Alaskan base has begun...

To describe the gameplay as intense would be a disservice; the emotions of trepidation are unsurpassed; akin to the first time you started playing *Resident Evil*. But whereas Capcom's masterpiece featured pre-rendered backdrops, *MGS* improves on this already spectacular formula by adding the element of 'real-time' to the entire expedition. The freedom this gives you is unparalleled; meaning any camera angle is within reach; an enemy can be spotted from almost any point of view, and there's many ways to utilize specific items designed with this freedom in mind, which I'll cover later. But I digress. On with the storming of the compound...

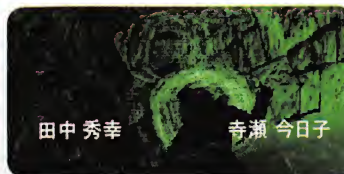
Tapping on the metal box, Solid Snake alerts a guard. Puzzled, the guard trots forward toward him. Stepping into the shadows, the guard fails to

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By David Hodgson

metal gear solid



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Solid Snake exits his crippled submersible and infiltrates the enemy compound...

A man for whom the word 'impenetrable' is mockingly laughed at, Solid Snake has the supreme talent of entering any fortification, whether perched high on a cliff-top or submerged deep beneath the waves. Solid Snake was responsible for catapulting the name Fox Hound into the hearts and minds of both the criminal underground and the world's military forces thanks to his thoroughly successful first operation, the *Outer Heaven Crisis*. Once the mission was completed, Solid Snake left the Fox Hound unit and was approached by the CIA who requested him to perform some deep cover work for them. Due to his credentials,



Solid Snake

Real Name: Unknown Nationality: American Age: Thirties

Solid Snake was able to work in a 'freelance' capacity as a non-official officer.

During this time, Solid became increasingly at odds with the CIA's methods and bureaucracy, his firmly held opinions lead him to leave the agency, turning instead to the life of a mercenary, offering his particular brand of stealth espionage to the highest bidder. The strains of such raptorial work took a toll on Solid Snake's health, and after two years he resigned his services and retreated into the Canadian wilderness. This time in the tundra was a welcome relief for Solid Snake, until his commander, Roy Campbell, coaxed him back into

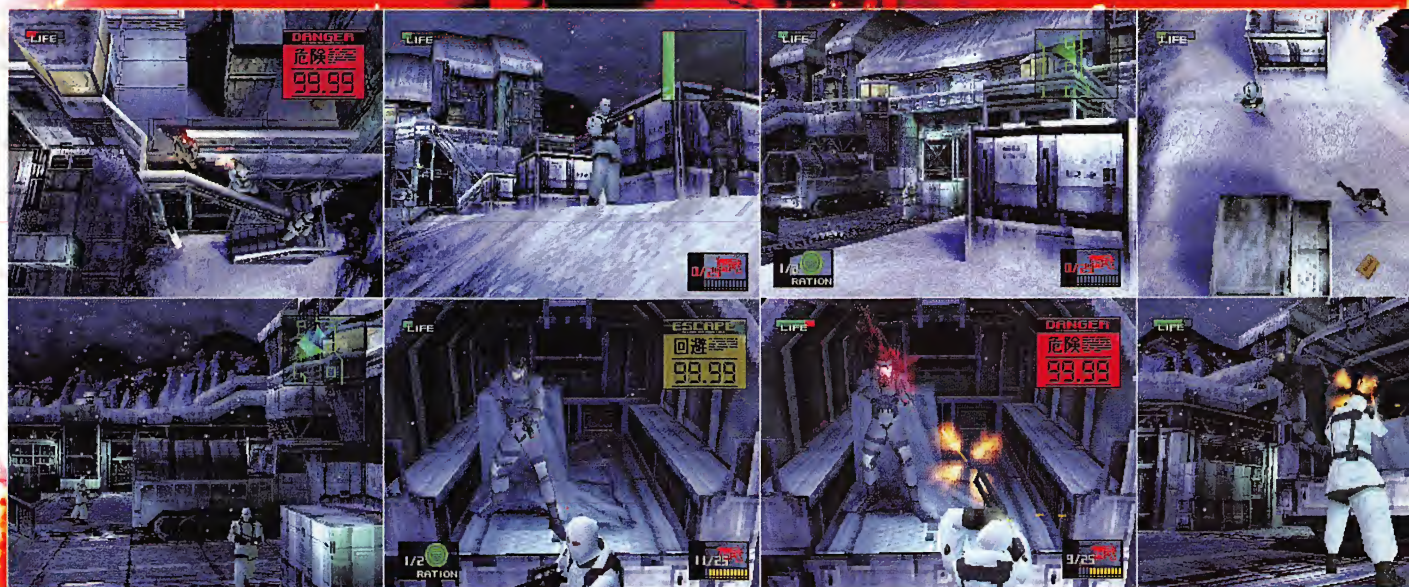
another infiltration mission; codenamed *The Uprising of Zanzibar*. Once this military state had surrendered (thanks in no small part to Solid Snake's role) and the apparent death of a henchman known only as 'Big Boss', Solid Snake once again returned to his life of hermitage, this time in the Twin Lakes area of the Alaskan mountains.

Solid Snake's life was simple; he lived in a log cabin alongside the abundance of wildlife, eating mainly blueberries, other fruit and the odd deer or rabbit. During this time Solid Snake discovered he was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); the result of his previous two missions. This mental anguish and trauma took the form of headaches, visible hallucinations and terrible guilt; all of which built up into severe mental confusion, an affliction exacerbated by the solitude. Solid Snake attempted to limit this condition by indulging in huskie sleigh races to forget his past. In late March, Solid Snake is preparing for a 1049 mile sleigh race between Anchorage and Nome when he receives a call from Roy Campbell. His expertise is being called upon for one last deadly mission...

spot Solid Snake, and resumes patrol. I check the radar screen in the top right hand corner and notice that I'm in 'Infiltration Mode', meaning that every guard has a coned line-of-sight. If a run near to this cone, my radar is jammed, I enter 'Alert Mode' and the guards give chase. I decide that Solid Snake should walk to a small puddle. I cross it (noting the ripples and reflections) and another sentry spots me. As the camera pans to an isometric or overhead view, the base siren sounds; and Alert Mode is in full effect! Reinforcements were called, my jammed radar was replaced with a timer which counted down to 'Evasion Mode' as I ran and hid. Evasion Mode lasted for a few long seconds as the guards continued their search, and satisfied that I'd fled, they resumed their watch.

I then paused and thought about the strategy on display here; there was simply a tremendous number of different ways to tackle this level. Informing guards of your presence, then either punch comboing them, back-flipping them or creeping up behind them and strangling them. Various items could be employed, including

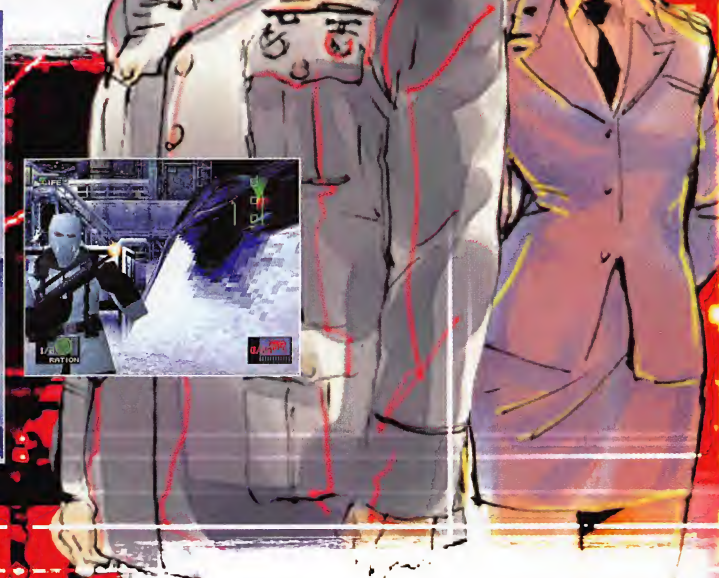
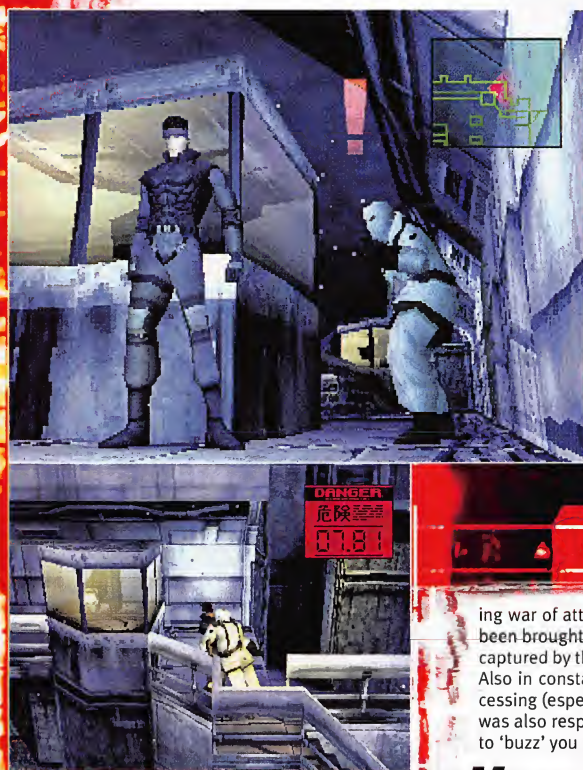




the Scope; binoculars with a 100-1000 foot zoom (smooth, *Goldeneye*-style zooming, mind you). There was the first-person viewpoint to check your level surroundings (no moving, just looking), and also various ways of escaping, such as diving back into the water, or hiding behind crates and a forklift truck (attacking sentries who were armed with automatic machine guns with punches and kicks was also tried with a distinct lack of success). Then finally, the elevator descended, producing another guard. Once disembarked, Snake entered the lift and the adventure really began...

After another cut-scene where Solid Snake ascends in the elevator up the side of a gigantic rockface, darts behind a girder and views a snow base, Liquid Snake boarding an enormous helicopter (I noted incredible motion blur on the camera and exceptional detail

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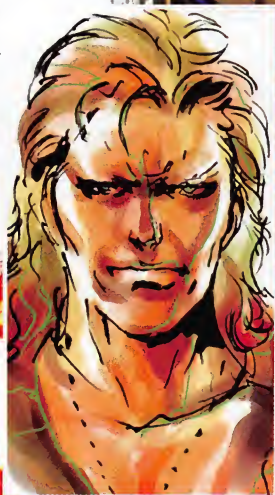


Introducing Roy Campbell and Mei Ling, your vital link in your ongoing war of attrition. Roy is the ex-commander of Fox Hound, and although in his 60s and retired, he's been brought back due to his friendship and understanding of Solid Snake. His niece, Meryl, has been captured by this new Fox Hound faction, and Bob will help in any way he can... just bring his niece back! Also in constant communication is the Chinese teen Mei Ling, in charge of communication data processing (especially those of spy satellites, hence your comprehensive radar) in this operation. Mei Ling was also responsible for developing Solid Snake's neck communicator, and this enables both of them to 'buzz' you from even the most remote of locations. Roy and Mei, standing by...

Meanwhile, back at headquarters...

THE GOOCHUATER

Despite being born and initially raised in the United Kingdom, Liquid Snake's appearance and mixed bloodline allows him to pass for almost any nationality. From an early age, Liquid Snake exhibited extraordinary fighting skills, and was recruited by the British information agency (known as the SIS) to act as a 'sleeper' in the Middle East. His undercover operation was espionage and demolition based. To further his unarmed destructive capabilities, he was forced into underground hand-to-hand combat from the age of 12. By the age of 17, his impressive fighting was utilized by the British special forces (the SAS), and he was ordered to destroy mobile SCUD launchers in the Gulf War. Unfortunately, during this mission, Liquid Snake was



captured, became a prisoner of war in Iraq, and disappeared.

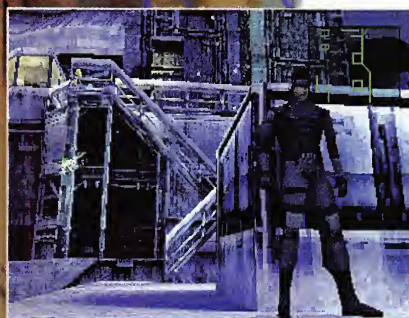
After *The Uprising of Zanzibar* (once Solid Snake had left Fox Hound), Liquid Snake resurfaced and joined this official espionage unit; the first time in his career his constant whereabouts were known. Subsequently, he became Fox Hound's leader, not least because his constant deep cover operations in the adverse weather conditions of Arab nations meant he thrived in the extremes of cold and heat. And now, the malicious intentions of Liquid Snake have become clear, his true colors show him to be a cunning and ruthless terrorist without equal... until now.

where the experience reached an almost mythical level. I was simply staggered at the detail present here. What's on display is the entrance to a snow base, complete with helipad, searchlights, store rooms, moving clouds, randomly falling snow, a truck plus security cameras and guards. And no pop-up. And no warping textures. And no slowdown. Anywhere. And the textures that do appear are excellently detailed (the character textures are almost on a par with *Resident Evil 2*'s).

It was on this level that I spent most of my time dying in an attempt to procure screenshots for you good people. I wandered onto a snow bank, watched with glee as a soldier followed my footprints round a corner and into my open arms. I snapped his neck. I listened to several radio messages (all in Japanese with Japanese subtitles; whereas the official version is set to feature but over eight hours of American dubbing!); Solid Snake has a digital receiver implanted in his neck and ear enabling him to chat with base command and other folk with one gulp of his esophagus (the radio commentary features gruff old Roy Campbell, the comely Mei Ling, and many others including a yet-undisclosed optional information source who only informs you of interesting Alaskan flora and fauna, just a small example of how over-the-top Konami went on this project). But the majority of my excursion behind enemy lines was to test the first of Solid Snake's field equipment. Aside from the Scope, I located the Therm.G (thermal imaging equipment) and sat agape as my surroundings flicked to infra-red. Locating heat sources was obviously easier now, and this enabled me to find my first projectile armanent hidden in a truck; the Socom. This semi-automatic pistol fires around 20 shots and features an impressive laser

target which plants a small red dot as you'd expect. What I wasn't expecting was the laser beam is transparent and varies in opacity depending on the atmospheric conditions.

Also available were two types of grenades; Chaff



Smoothly zoom in on unsuspecting foes!



Liquid Snake

Real Name: Unknown Nationality: English Age: Thirties



and Stun. Chaff deactivated all the electrical circuits in the zone, enabling me to bound past a previously efficient security camera system with ease (the rotating cameras droop and twitch and the screen fills with yellow dots). Without the Chaff grenades, cameras needed to be side-stepped under, otherwise a spot of slapping with numerous incoming guards was the order of the day. The other grenade provided me with even more explosive pleasure; after letting the pin drop, I landed the grenade at a guard's feet. Three seconds later, the blinding white flash informed me that my grenade had exploded. The previously steady guard was now crumpled on the ground with dazed stars circling his head. This was an excellent indication of the guard's current state; startled enemies produce an exclamation mark (!) above their heads, inquisitive soldiers surprised or following a trail produce a question mark (?), an foe's eyes twinkle the first time the react, and sleeping guards even display 'zees' (Z) to indicate their soporific state.

To conclude my initial level cavorting, I crawled underneath a truck, leapt into the back of it and exchanged gunfire with guards (cue ricocheting bullets off the walls and impressive blood-spurts as I was winged numerous times) and I found that now infamous cardboard box which I utilized appallingly (note to self: a moving box with feet showing attracts attention, and cardboard isn't bullet proof). Reverting to the first-person view inside the box is novel, as you're looking through the slit of the handle. And reaching the balcony at the other end of the level grants you a view of the entire courtyard, plus the ability to shoulder flip guards off the balcony. The sheer number of ways that a level can be completed is certain to be one of the game's many major attractions. Add superb analog control and a hugely involving plot and you're on your way to realizing just what Konami are set to deliver this October.

At the moment, I can only explain *MGS* as a sort of weird hybrid with a go-anywhere *Tomb Raider* feel, but gameplay as tight and focused as *Resident Evil*; just with a load more options and tactical decisions to make. This means it should appeal to every single gamer, from the fighting fan to the RPG freak, especially as there's no 'right way' to complete a level (proficient players are 'rewarded' with tougher sub-

sequent stages, however). Hideo Kojima's rule of hiring developers straight from college with no preconceived ideas of the PlayStation's boundaries is in keeping with Konami's rule to break the processing limits of the PlayStation. The results are a higher level of graphical splendor and deep gameplay; and this is what I believe Konami has achieved, especially after I viewed some of the later levels. I'll halt myself from excited chatter about Solid Snake's future exploits until next time, and introduce you to Mister Hideo Kojima, the man behind this ambitious plan...

More next issue! ☹



Even though *Metal Gear Solid* was playable at the Tokyo Game Show, trying your hand at Kojima's sure-fire hit while surrounded by 80,000 kids wasn't an easy task. In order to make sure the gaming press had no problems in experiencing their game, Konami was kind enough to invite a few of us to a private showing at KCEJ the day after the show ended. There we were treated to both an extensive play test (see last issue) and an interview featuring *Metal Gear*'s creator, Hideo Kojima. The following is an excerpt of that interview, with questions coming from different members of the gaming press from throughout the world.

How long has *Metal Gear Solid* been in development?

I started the planning part of the game in 1993 and started writing the story. Then in 1994 we were developing *PoliceNauts* and that's when we started putting together the 3D stuff. The actual programming began in 1996 and in the mean time, the other half of the team finished putting together *PoliceNauts* for the Sega Saturn. In the very beginning of the planning process I said this game was going to be fully polygonal, and back then, there were no games which were fully polygonal and the programmers were not happy about that. And when we started to understand how this could be done and started development, that's when *Resident Evil* and other 3D games came out.

How many people are on the team?

We started out with like ten people, and that grew to about 30. Of the 30 people who developed this game, only five have actual experience creating games. These people worked on *Snatcher* and *PoliceNauts*.

Did you plan all the little details like the breath from the start or were these things which came about during the development process?

Not always. There are a lot of things that were added to the game that were not in the original game plan.

Every single PlayStation game that has been released so far has had a certain amount of pop-up and polygon distortion around the edges of the screen. How did you get around this problem?

I'm often asked this. We don't have any special techniques. The staff are all young and it's our first polygon game so we had to start from scratch. But we did spend a lot of time on this and I guess it's a product of our perseverance. One thing which helped a lot was that our programmers and designers are really young people. They didn't know too much about making games so they didn't really know when to com-

promise, when to say "this is only a game, so this is all we have to do". They didn't have that kind of mentality so it was easy for me to tell them that "we have to go for perfection and we have to make it better". Take the breath, for example. This is Alaska so it is cold and you've got to see the white breath. But by putting this on the screen it takes various textures and everything. I just told the young people that we need this breath and they just worked hard to get it on the screen.

In order to keep the load times down, are you constantly streaming the levels off of the CD? Not the map graphics but the sound.

What percentage of the PlayStation's power do you think you are using?

The programmers say they're using 120% but I still think there's more we could do. We created this game specifically for the PlayStation but even with this machine there were a lot of things that we couldn't do. Maybe when there's another machine we'll try that one.

Will there be any CG FMV in the game instead of the real time stuff?

We couldn't come up with anything we liked. We were really tight about the CG.

Will the game support the analog controller?

We investigated it but it's tricky. We use it but not like it's a stepped affair where you can press the button harder so that he runs. As for now it simply moves him in that direction. Snake already has a lot of running types as it is so we didn't try use the analog for that.





How many difficulty settings are there in the game?

Instead of having different difficulty levels, what we have done is have the game analyze your play many times. For example, it looks at how many times you die in the practice stage and uses this to alter things later on in the game to match your ability, positioning enemies differently, etc. You can't choose the difficulty yourself.

Concerning the AI, are most of the guards and enemies aggressive or do they ever retreat or run away from Snake?

Initially, we were trying to do that by assigning each character with their own blood type and by making some guys wimps but we dropped that. Instead, we decided to have two sets of soldiers; those who are the defenders and those who are guards. When they become aware of Snake, they go to whatever is important in that room and protect it. These guys are huge, two meters tall. And then you have the chasing soldiers that keep on coming after you.

Is there any other dialogue in the game other than via the transmitter?

Yes. For instance when you rescue a hostage or when you meet a boss, you talk to them.

About how much dialogue is there in total?

Adding up the demos and video scenes, it ends up being about eight or nine hours. This is a lot as there are something like 20 characters

involved. And you don't have to listen to all the dialogue. You can skip through all the radio transmissions and just move on your own. For example, there's one guy in the game who talks about Alaska, the climate, the animals that live there and so on. Now you don't need this information but if you do talk to this person, he gives it to you.

Will there be any game play aspects brought over from the MSX version like the disappearing floors, etc. in this version?

For those who've played the older *Metal Gear* game, they'll be smiling when they see certain things. You'll notice.

Sneak looks younger than he did in older artwork. Does this game take place before the other *Metal Gears*?

The story comes after the previous games but the original character looked a little too old so we tried to make him look a little younger and energetic. We gave him better looks.

Is there a two player battle mode?

We were thinking of making it. We would have liked to play hide and seek against each other but it isn't in.

Wouldn't it be easier to do this game on the N64?

As for the enemy AI, that might be easier on the N64 but given the dark, rich textures and its feel, it had to be done on this machine. If we were to use the N64 we'd have to change

the game so it suits the machine.

Do you have any plans to do this on the N64 or PC?

We don't have any plans to do it for now.

At the time of the last TGS in September, you said you were planning to release *MGS* this April. I was wondering if there was any particular reason why you had moved the release back to this September?

I guess we underestimated the difficulty of doing a fully polygonal 3D game. Given free polygons you are able to see a lot of stuff from different directions and that causes some problems. We had to get rid of each and every one of them.

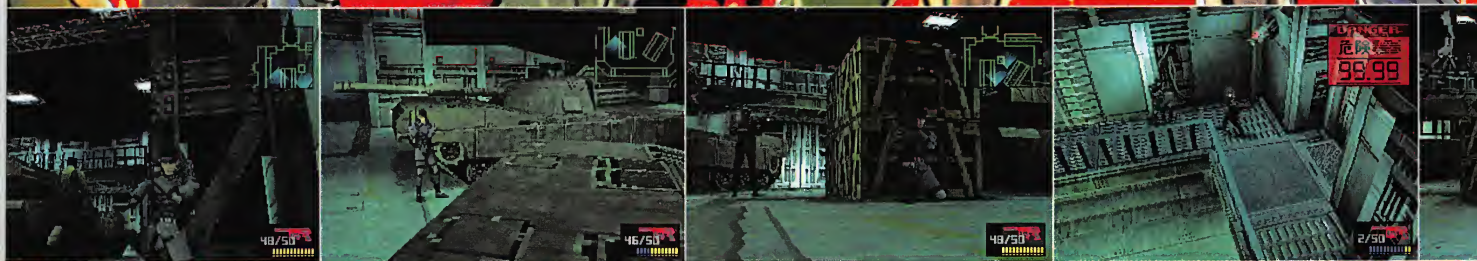
Which game do you feel is *Metal Gear Solid's* biggest competition? *Resident Evil 2*?

Actually, no. *Resident Evil 2* is a different type of game, but I like it!

At this time Jon Sloan, Konami of America's liaison was quick to remark that they didn't feel that *Metal Gear* had a major competitor. Frankly, we couldn't have said it better.

Special thanks go to Hideo Kojima and the folks from Konami Japan that took the time to host this event, Jon Sloan from Konami America for his invaluable assistance and the other members of the gaming press that participated in the interview. Oh, and an extra special thanks to whoever suggested the German Beer Hall for dinner...

Interview by Ryan Lockhart





contra

By Brady Fiechter

210 BPM TARGET AMMO 280

Aliens, guns, and explosions -

Contra's back in its second appearance on Playstation

In their second effort in bringing the indelible *Contra* series to the Playstation, Appaloosa have devised a unique way of presenting the action in a standout level called "weightless." As a high-speed cargo elevator drops at an incredible rate, a low-gravity scenario ensues, and your character twists and turns in a veritably convincing manner, generating the illusion of an exciting free-fall. After minutes of a typical apoplectic *Contra*-style battle between various mechanical entities, your soldier changes his perspective from lateral combat to a position facing the background, where the confrontation is now waged with the barrage of fire coming from oncoming rocket launchers.

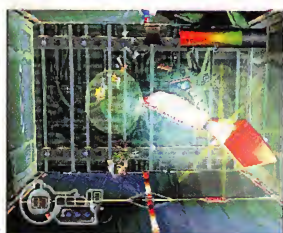
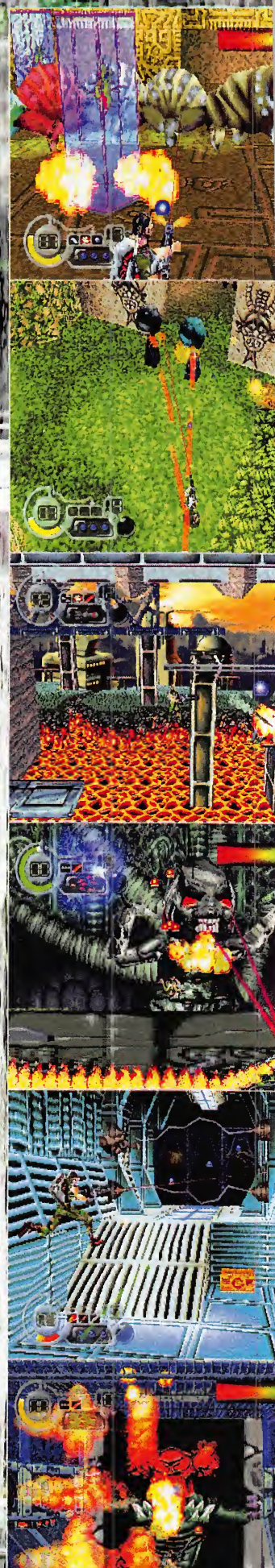
I love it when developers show me something new. If only the entire course of *The Adventure of Contra* was as visionary as the "weightless" stage, we would have something to get monstrously excited about. And while the majority of what is found in *Contra* is an extension of the proverbial *Contra* action mix, there's still more than enough here to anticipate. No matter how you look at it, *Contra's* back - and this can only be good.

While every stage requires identical modes of progression - blow things up real good - each is set up in different perspectives. The game begins and ends in the ever-more-popular pseudo 3D setting where everything is polygonal, yet the action is confined to the typical action/platformer paths. There's one problem, however - the camera is fairly static, and a bit disappointing after experiencing such ambitious, dynamic uses of motion in this style of game in the past. The brunt of the game places the player in open 3D environments, where the view and path varies from level to level - some are fixed behind the character, while some are well overhead.

Returning to *Contra* are a few levels and bosses from past games in the series, only now they are given the 32bit face-lift. The problem is, someone needs to find a new surgeon over at Appaloosa; it doesn't bode well when you find yourself wanting to play the original stages instead. Indeed the game has a ways to go before respectfully brandishing the *Contra* name, and after *Contra: Legacy of War*, Appaloosa are in the hot seat. Vindication would be oh so sweet.

Your mission: Blow Things Up Real Good

No other game has been able to reproduce the same furious intensity as *Contra*. Some feel the series rests in the shadows of past consoles, waiting to be resurrected on 32bit. Appaloosa have laid the foundation for a formidable game, yet there remains much building to be done for the *Contra* force to rise once again.



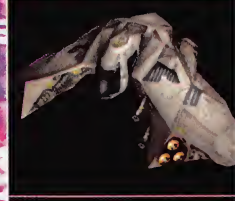


descent: freespace

Evoking the spirit of Elite and space combat of the past...

By Mike Hobbs

Warm up those flight sticks and cluster bombs, cosmic destructors. It's time to bring a little fire to the cold depths of space... the fire of exploding spaceships! Don't forget your freeze-dried strawberries...



Leaving twisting, claustrophobic corridors behind, this curious spin-off of the *Descent* series attempts to capture the action of free flying, deep space combat. The aptly named *Descent: Freespace* is more immediately comparable to the PlayStation's *Colony Wars*, though befitting a PC title, an increased level of complexity has been folded into the mix.

In *Freespace*, the storyline has the Terrans (that's us) engaged in a war with the Vasudans (that's them, the bad people), the most important side effect of which is getting to blow up massive attack craft in space! The game will follow performance-based, branching mission structure and features a nice mixture of level objectives. Joining the expected escorting and outright destructive missions were fresh standouts such as having to clear a path through an asteroid field for a massive cruiser called the Galatea. This was no easy feat as the power of PC allowed for a truly nerve racking number of cosmic boulders flying around on screen.

In 3D accelerated form, our preview version impressed all around. Truly cinematic, filmed explosions and some staggeringly massive space cruisers (one measures over two relative kilometers) worked wonders for the game's visual impact. While its actual space background was no match for *Colony Wars*' colorful and active interpretations, *Freespace* more than made up for it in object density and concurrent action. Aurally, well-voiced comm transmissions from wingmen and others of the cause added a nice urgency and background, while explosions were rich in bass. Only the weak synthphonic soundtrack disappointed.

What this game has to do with any previous *Descents* I have little idea. All I do know is that it's shaping up to be an excellently deep shooter. And don't you worry your helmeted little head; a wealth of multiplayer options will be in place including cooperative, team, and straight dog-fighting. Check back next month when Gamers' Republic declares yay or nay on Interplay's *Descent: Freespace*. ☛



Engage gigantic space cruisers in spectacular combat

A host of advanced craft to put in your flight

dune 2000

By Brady Fiechter

In the world of Dune, an element called Melange commands the power of a god. Feeding its peoples' existence, the spice grants them inveterate youthfulness, a life spanning centuries, the ability to manipulate the fabric of space. Used as trade and barter throughout the universe, it is a wellspring of life... and conflict.

Imagine the power struggle precipitated from such a precious substance. It is an intriguing scenario, a consummate setup serving as the foundation to *Dune 2*, the revolutionary and wildly popular real-time strategy game introduced more than six years ago on PC. Now that the popularity of the PC continues to blossom, a ripe path is open to many strategy fans unfamiliar with the seminal *Dune 2*, and Westwood Studios is preparing to update the classic as *Dune 2000*.

Preserving the key elements that captured fans of the original, *Dune 2000*'s mission remains to wage war against anyone



opposing the harvesting of the Melange.

Three key Houses are in search of mass quantities of the precious spice, and it is up to the player to harbor the largest quantities, winning the auspices of the Emperor. The missions, which require the player to efficiently set up units to protect his own stock and plunder opposing forces, are carried out over vast deserts where giant sandworms, ruthless merchants, and the Emperor himself contribute to the strife.

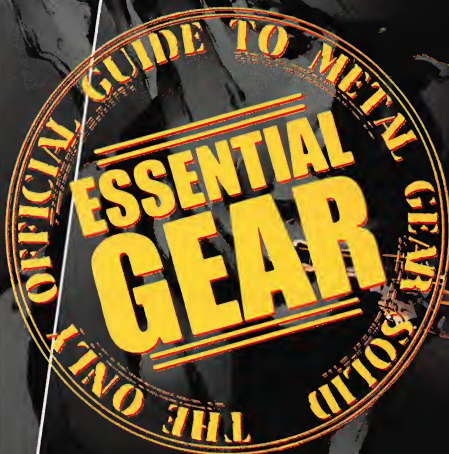
While the core of *Dune 2* remains - all of the original units and structures are selectable - new cinemas and music heighten the story, and the missions have been revamped and rescripted. Flashy yet true to the essence of its predecessor, *Dune 2000* boasts scintillating effects of massive explosions, missile trails, and real-time lighting. In the midst of the massive upgrades, there is one addition guaranteed to bring smiles to the faces of not only rabid *Dune* fans, but strategy fans in general: Multiplayer internet action. ✱



TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION



OFFICIAL MISSION HANDBOOK

The image shows the cover of the 'Metal Gear Solid Official Mission Handbook'. The title 'METAL GEAR' is written in large, bold, red letters with a black outline. Above it, in smaller red letters, is 'TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION'. Below the main title, the word 'SOLID' is written in white letters on a red horizontal bar. At the bottom, 'OFFICIAL MISSION HANDBOOK' is written in yellow letters. The background is dark and textured, with a white circular object, possibly a helmet or a part of a weapon, visible on the right side.

- INCREDIBLY DETAILED WALKTHROUGHS!
- MISSION SECRETS & STRATEGIES!
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- INTERVIEWS AND EXCLUSIVE CG ART FROM KONAMI OF JAPAN!
- SPECIAL BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT THE MAKING OF METAL GEAR SOLID!

The Only Official Strategy Guide

On Sale October 1998 for \$14.99





jersey devil

GR recently had the pleasure of meeting with Remi Racine, the president of Behaviour Interactive, and lead game designer Claude Pelletier, at the lovely Long Beach Westin. In town attending the Computer Game Developer's Conference (see news), we spoke to them briefly about Jersey Devil and their upcoming plans...

GR: Jumping right in, what's up with Jersey Devil?

Remi: It's coming out in June. Sony should announce the date soon.

GR: What's been done in the time that the game's been with Sony?

Remi: A lot of improvements were made, mostly in regards to balancing the game from the European to the American version.

Claude: Fixing some little bugs that were still in the game.

GR: Did the engine get worked on?

Claude: Yes, we improved it. We improved the camera movement.

GR: Is the camera fully automatic or user adjustable?

Claude: It's a mix. When there's an object blocking the camera, it's automatic but you can control rotation around the axis.

GR: Do you have any software z-buffering or anything like that?

Claude: We have a kind of z-buffering, but nothing really elaborate. PlayStation z-buffering takes a lot of time to calculate and the game simply couldn't afford that.

GR: What did Sony do as far as play-testing? What did they feel needed improvement?

Claude: Uh, the look of certain objects, little things.

Remi: Nothing major, but they had lists of small little details that they wanted fixed. If you play the European version, you are going to see that the first level of the North American version is easier, more intuitive.

GR: How has it been working with Sony?

Remi: Very good. All the testing and improvement was done very professionally. They found stuff that we never would've thought of.

Claude: They really have good play testers.

Remi: And focus groups can help as well. We and Sony may think the game is easy, and you then do a focus group with seventeen to six year olds and nobody gets through a particular spot and you have to rethink things. That was a lot of little things here and there.

GR: So even though it may be a bit easier, would

you say that the American version is more balanced and a better game overall?

Claude: No question about that.

GR: How's your next game coming along?

Claude: It's going well. We're going to be showing something at E3.

GR: What's the game called?

Claude: Relayers.

GR: What type of game is it exactly?

Claude: It's a shooter, but you can play with three characters instead of one and you have to combine the abilities of each character to do your mission. So you aren't just shooting, you have to think about using the abilities of each character to do a certain task.

Remi: But it's going to be also a bit of a puzzler.

GR: What is your perspective in the game?

Claude: It's third person, but less cartoony than Jersey Devil, a little more serious.

GR: Will that be self published or will you be shopping it around?

Claude: We're not publishing stuff, just selling.

GR: Has anyone shown any interest yet?

Claude: Yeah [laughs], but I can't actually tell you who is interested.

GR: Do you have any plans for other hardware, PC, etc?

Claude: Yeah, actually. Our engine is working on PC and PS. When we finish a game on PS, it's practically done on PC. Our engine is very portable.

GR: So will we see Jersey on PC?

Claude: Uh, we're still in negotiation for that, as it will not be Sony's.

GR: Will it support acceleration?

Claude: Actually 3DFX, but I'm not really the one to ask. Other cards will be supported as well, but it runs great just in software.

GR: Do you guys have any interest in developing for the Katana?

Claude: Yep. We are thinking about that. Uh, we'll see because it's difficult to get real information about the system. But we are interested.

(At this point, a strange man walked up to us at our little table)

Strange Man: Excuse me. If I had an extra 25 cents, I could buy a taco.

GR: Sorry, we don't have any change.

Claude: I don't have any money. Sorry.

GR: I'd say that just about wraps things up. Thanks for your time.

Claude: You are very welcome and good luck with the magazine. It looks great.



Swallow the souls of the lost... legacy of kain soul reaver

By Dave Rees

No matter how you look at it, Crystal Dynamics' *Gex: Enter the Gecko* was a gourmet feast of high-tech platforming on the PlayStation. In the highly revered tradition of *Mario 64*, its powerful free-roaming graphics engine eloquently shifted streaming high-res environments and pushed the PS into previously unattainable realms. But while *Gex* was brilliant in its technical achievements, it was far too cute for some gamers. With their upcoming sequel, *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, Crystal Dynamics will surely close the gap.

Visualize *Gex*'s omnipotent 3D engine drawing a highly detailed gothic underworld teeming with highly evolved vampires that transcend our current understanding of evil. Replace the happy little tail-whipping critter with a decaying soul reaper named Raziel who impales his enemies on an ancient staff, effortlessly tosses huge concrete blocks about, recklessly

descends deep chasms on flesh-torn wings, and insatiably vacuums his victims' souls into his gaping jowl. Now imagine what kind of story such a game would be born of.

Although it is Kain's legacy that continues, it is not through his eyes that this second installment transpires. One thousand years have come to pass since Kain made a pact with the devil and avenged his death and Nosgoth has since fallen under his iniquitous rule. But it is his once trusted lieutenant, Raziel, who now seeks revenge. Shamefully tossed into a water vortex by Kain (apparently a horribly painful



fate for any order of vampire), he was left to wither and die. But Raziel managed to escape the searing whirlpool and in his fleshless and haggard state he vowed to put an end to Kain's insidious reign... by any means.

The many fans of the original *Kain* will surely be in for a lot of shocking surprises with this sequel as it is an entirely new experience in many ways; most prominent of which are its stunning 3D environments. A vast line-up

of architecturally precise structures textured to details unequalled as of yet on the PlayStation account for most of Raziel's surroundings. And from the ornate gothic cathedrals (decorated with wall sculptures, paintings and eerie candle-lit altars) to the weather-beaten Italianate towers that extend skyward into the clouds, the level design rivals the best that the *Tomb Raider* series has to offer. However, what we have seen so far merely flaunts these sprawling baroque worlds without much to show in terms of gameplay. But something tells me that we won't be disappointed. ☹



Crystal Dynamics' incredible gothic underworld sequel!



mission: impossible



Gamers' Republic were blessed by a brief visit from Ocean, displaying an almost complete version of the long delayed **Mission: Impossible**. We were granted about twenty minutes gameplay on a nearly complete rev of the game and had the opportunity to speak with lead programmer, Benoît Arribart. We'll review **M:I** next month and for now, you can enjoy these screens and our chat with Benoît. His comments follow...

GR: What problems were addressed during *Mission: Impossible's* delay?

Benoît: What delay?! [laughs]

GR: Let's say since E3 last year.

BA: Well, first we moved the project back to France because the team in the US fell apart so we had to bring it to France. We started to look at everything to see what we could improve and try to change less things and keep most of it. That's mainly what we've been doing over the last year.

GR: Did the team change completely from the US to France?

BA: Not completely. I've worked on *Mission: Impossible* since 1996. I was there to help the US team. In April or May of '97, two other guys from France went to the US to help the team. We had quite a lot of problems trying to find people who were interested in the project. Anyway, the best solution we had was to bring French people in to help the team.

GR: What kinds of projects were you working on before this?

BA: We were working on the Saturn, on *Alone in the Dark 2*. Before that, some of the guys were working on PC titles like *Alone in the Dark 3*.

GR: How successful were you in getting elements from the movie into the game?

BA: We were really free in the way that we could use elements from the movie. We didn't have to follow the exact plot. We just

used some key elements. There's the mole, you have to find Max, near the end of the game is the high-speed train and we kept the "Black Vault" where Ethan steals the NOC list. For the rest, we pretty much did what we wanted.

GR: Were you pleased working on the N64?

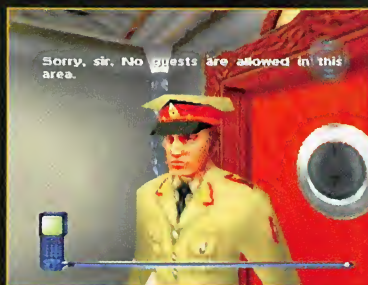
BA: Yeah. We found it to be very powerful, although as usual, you wish it was more powerful. But it's really nice, you can almost do what you want. You never really have big problems unless you try to display lots and lots of things.

GR: Was the original design to ambitious for the N64?

BA: Yes. Uh, the artificial intelligence for example. They really wanted it to be a simulation and were trying to implement a lot of character behavior that was much too complicated to program. Basically, all the things that we thought were non-essential were removed. We moved back to a simpler AI to simulate simple behaviors that still lent a sense of realism to each level. The original design was much too complicated in this way. Another thing was that the original team wasn't really familiar with what the N64 could display, so all the levels were very high quality and high in polygon count so we had to reduce the graphics.

GR: How closely does the level architecture follow the design set forth in the film?

BA: Well, we have some outdoor levels that are completely new and have no relation to the movie. We have the Embassy levels, but



"Your mission, should you decide to accept it..."

we didn't really follow the actual geometry. In the CIA levels, nothing at all looks like the movie. In fact, the only thing that really looks like the movie is the Black Vault.

GR: Are any of the models based on characters from the film?

BA: No. We didn't have the rights to use Tom Cruise's face, and our characters may look like the ones from the film from very far away. So no, none of the characters were based directly on the ones portrayed by actors in the film.

GR: How many polygons are being used for the characters and environments?

BA: For the characters, something like 350 polygons. For the environments, it's really difficult to say. A lot, maybe a few thousand.

GR: Did you have problems dealing with the severely limited storage capacity of a cart?

BA: Not really, actually. With the N64, you can only use small textures anyway, so the textures are never a big problem. Because it's an N64 game, you have to use a small memory sized texture. The compression we use works very well on geometry so we didn't have problems with that. As for the sound, the original game was going to be on an eight megabyte cart, and now it's twelve, mostly for the sound.

GR: Were there problems with the owners of the license? What didn't they want you doing in the game?

BA: The main things were that we could not use Tom Cruise and that it could not be violent. Mr. Tom Cruise did not want it to be violent. It had to be a spy simulation but it couldn't be as violent as *Goldeneye*.

GR: Since it only seems loosely based on the film, where else did you draw inspiration from?

BA: From the original series, mainly. All the gadgets were inspired by the series. From the movie, we kept the idea of you being accused of being a mole, with the IMF using you to find the real mole.

GR: Did you enjoy working on a game with this kind of theme?

BA: Oh yeah. I loved the series and I quite enjoyed the movie, so it was fun translating that to a game.

GR: Do you think the disparity between the movie's release and the game's will hurt the product?

BA: I don't think so. Probably if you think of it as just a license of the movie, then sure, it's a bad thing. But I think *Mission: Impossible*, the game, is more related to the series so people hopefully won't connect it exclusively with the movie.

GR: Have any members of the film production seen the game?

BA: Yeah. I know that Cruise has seen the game as well as Wagner (producer). And a lot of people at Viacom saw the game.

GR: Will you be making *Mission: Impossible* for any other formats in the future?

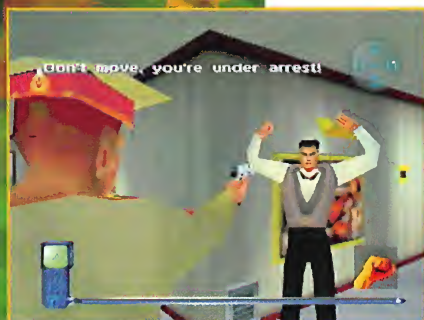
BA: Probably not, no. There is an exclusivity agreement of some kind that I'm not entirely familiar with.

GR: What type of games do you and members of your team like to play?

BA: Uh, *Duke Nukem*, *Quake*, *Starcraft*. Mainly network games, especially *Starcraft*.

GR: We can relate to that. Well, thank you for taking the time out of your understandably busy schedule to speak with us.

BA: You are welcome.



"...this message will self destruct in one minute..."

ninja

By Dave Rees

Egregious amounts of patience are often required of us gamers. Time after time, a game is hyped beyond belief only to suffer from indefinite delays or postponements; sometimes disappearing for months before any new information is uttered. Such has been the case with the Core Design's upcoming title *Ninja*. Originally claimed to be their next big game after *Tomb Raider*, the title unfortunately was put on the backburner and preceded by



both *Fighting Force* and *Tomb Raider 2*. The good news is that long delays as such usually mean one thing; more time to focus on quality and gameplay improvements. Hopefully, that is the case with *Ninja*.

Ninja's storyline transpires through the vengeful eyes of an eager young Japanese mercenary named Kurosawa. After a spiritual journey abroad, he returned to his native town in Japan only to learn that while he was away, the townsfolk were viciously attacked, and an indescribably evil force possessed those who survived. You assume the role of Kurosawa as he pledges to avenge the horrible affliction that now plagues his town.

While still early, the game plays almost identically to *Fighting Force* (the 3D engine appears to be very similar), but with its *Shinobi*-like appeal, clever level design, and moody sounds, it will likely reach greater heights when it is released



this Fall. Additionally, most of the game's levels are devoid of enemies and final gameplay elements, but the environments are intact and richly detailed. Trek through a critter-laden forest occupied by axe-wielding thugs, inferior martial artists, and... grazing rabbits. Creep through a cemetery overflowing with leaping lizard-men and skeletons that refuse to surrender before their bones are stomped to dust. Cross beaches, mountaintops, catacombs, monasteries, volcanic caves... Unlock chests containing magical swords, treasure, and arcane abilities. All good fun, but ninja purists will likely quibble over the game's lack of covert maneuvers as the action is very straightforward.

What might really hurt *Ninja* in the long run is its restrained gameplay. Although it never intends to give us the same freedom of movement that other 3D games have bestowed us with in the past (Core's own *Tomb Raider* series is a good example), I can't help but imagine how much more enthralling this game would be if you could control the camera, swim through the water, or interact with the environments more.

Ninja has the potential to be great, but it may be a little too late to market. We'll see. ☹

Fighting Force revisited, or the successor to Shinobi?

Ninja was originally conceived on the Sega Saturn, but as was the case with many such titles, the game was eventually announced for the PlayStation and subsequently the Saturn version was dropped. Early in the development cycle, Core actually had the Saturn version of the game running as smoothly as the PS version and it used some very clever programming routines to create transparency effects that were apparently next to impossible to accomplish on the Saturn. Much has changed since then, however...



O.D.T.

Traverse an ominous tower...
Or Die Trying in Psygnosis' newest addition to excellence

By Brady Fiechter

As the third person action/adventure games continue to proliferate on the consoles, the PC is primed to take the spillover of this white-hot genre. Psygnosis would certainly like us to believe that *O.D.T.* will be the quintessential offering set to cut through the mass of titles inevitably on the way. Although still in its infancy, *O.D.T.* may just lend credence to such a claim.

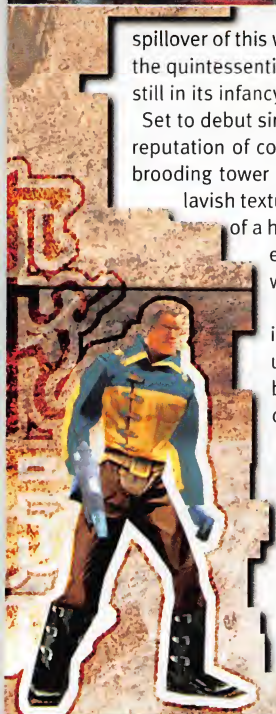
Set to debut simultaneously with a PlayStation version in October, *O.D.T.* cements Psygnosis' reputation of consistently molding beautiful playing environments. The story places you in a brooding tower of anachronistic architecture called 'Forbidden Zone', where rich lighting and lavish textures convincingly create the alien atmosphere. On a mission of mercy in search of a healing pearl hoped to eradicate a ravenous disease sweeping their home planet, a captain and crew of four are stranded in the tower after their ship crashes while returning with the pearl.

And so the game places you in combat situations with the tower's mutant inhabitants where action and RPG elements are required to escape, ultimately with the pearl in grasp. Puzzle solving and magic spells become part of the heavy action sequences, and vary from character to character. Depending on whom you chose - corporal, female lead,

strong man, or wizard/doctor - there will be physical attributes unique to each individual, continually enhanced through mounting experience. Moving at 30 fps, the motion-captured characters employ a number of individual special moves, each boasting over 100 animations: The corporal utilizes weapons, the strong man brute strength; the wizard is a vital healer, the woman a quick and shrewd fighter. The 3D worlds are deeply interactive, allowing for object destruction and manipulation as you progress deeper into the massive tower, which is divided into as many as 75 subsections spanning eight levels. Comprised of as many as 1000 polygons, the keepers of each area are intricately designed, eerily supporting the brooding essence of the castle exterior. Thrusting the player even deeper into the fantasy world, a Dolby Surround sound score will only add to the solemn atmosphere - the little something extra needed to distill *O.D.T.* from the compacted company it must keep. ✱

The next step in action games?

*Psygnosis adds their virtuosic touch
 to a futuristic world of action and adventure*



After the success of *Tekken 3*, Namco now needs another brawler to combat Capcom's sweet-looking *SF EX2* and the frankly frighteningly impressive *Ehrgeiz*. The plan? Reinvent their moderately successful sword-slashing coin-op and PlayStation masterpiece known as *Soul Blade*, adding new characters into the mix, pumping the graphics to new levels of impressive wonder, and bestowing arcade frequenters with a game far removed from the likes of *Mace* and all pretenders to the weapon-wielding beat-'em-up throne. A minor setback then occurred; Capcom had already taken the syllable 'ex' for their new 2D fighter, so it seems Namco were only able to use the second portion of King Arthur's sword to name their game. But no matter, as 'Calibur' should feature expertly motion-captured medieval men and women of distinguished valor cavorting across highly detailed areas, coupled with tweaked gameplay improving on the original *Blade* in almost every way. At least, that's what we're hoping for. At this moment in time though, we've some screenshots, exceptional artwork and interesting new information on the characters and control enhancements.

As with Namco's initial attempt to delve into the world of 3D pointy-stick dueling, the control scheme for the buttons remains exactly the same. One button essentially yields your character's weapon vertically, the other

By David Hodgson

soul calibur

The sequel to Soul Blade slices its way into arcades!

This game is still in development and all details are subject to change





horizontally, another guards and the fourth one plants fists or feet into your foe's squishiest of places. However, the joystick maneuvers this time around are a little more complex and intuitive, and lend themselves to a more 3D style of gameplay. This is achieved by tapping the joystick in any

of eight directions either once (making your character step in that desired vector), or twice (enabling the 'Advanced Run System'; fancy talk for your character fleeing from their foe in any heading they like). Of course, constant running isn't only unchivalrous, but can lead to an untimely ring-out.

At the time of writing, only three characters were in place. Two of these 'heroes in a warlike age' are a Grecian Princess and a masked bondage deviant. Sophitia takes to the stage to finish an unaccomplished mission, now uses her shield both defensively and offensively (indeed, it is possible to incorporate some chaining moves with just this buckler), and has a more impressive range of throws. Meanwhile, Voldo is more unpredictable than ever before, twisting and contorting, and making sure that his dual Katars trail through the air with the greatest of violet (and violent) brilliance. Note the statue of Voldo's prisoner, Velchi [Japanese spelling], in the background of his stage. Finally comes Kilik, the Kali-Yuga (Rod) brandisher. Known as "Awaken Destiny", this nineteen year old uses Ling-Sheng Su style play as well as 'coiled snake' throws to keep opponents at bay. His excellent reach proves problematic for close attack enemies, and his spear can propel Kilik into the air where diving (and a plethora of rather nasty descending) attacks can be employed.

Join us next time for a peek into Namco's next foray into fighting, where we'll hopefully learn of further characters, more on the ARS system, and the whereabouts of a certain mad plunderer called Cervantes (is that a pirate ship I see sinking in that background?). ☺

SOUL BLADE ADVENTURE



STREET FIGHTER

Street Fighter's second 3D iteration hopes to correct some criticisms leveled against its forebearer and keep the franchise alive into the next century. Thus far, all indications point toward this being an excellent and substantially improved follow up.

.....



SHARON

When *Street Fighter* first made the leap into the sordid world of 3D with *EX Plus Alpha*, opinions seemed divided over the relative success of the undertaking. It undoubtedly played very well, but many took issue with the unabashedly polygonal characters, deriding their blocky look. This shortcoming was no doubt amplified by Arika's success at creating smooth, envelope processed characters in *Tobal 2*. And while the combatants in *EX Plus Alpha* were beautifully animated and light sourced, there was no denying the rather rudimentary look to them. Also, and this was perhaps inevitable, many complained that classic *SF* characters were overlooked in favor of newer, less successful ones such as Skullomania and Kairi. Well, unlike in Hollywood, game sequels generally improve upon the originals, and *Street Fighter EX2* is no exception.

Most noticeably, the blocky look of *EX Alpha* is yesterday's news. Characters are now rounder, more sculpted in appearance and far more befitting of the current state of the art. Of course, the tasty frame rate of 60 has been kept intact. But what may be more pleasing to fans is the

addition of new characters culled from classic *SF*. Blanka and Vega (Balrog in Japanese versions) join the ranks this time around for a dose of old school charm. These join two new original characters, Sharon and Hayate.

It wouldn't be a fully realized sequel without some gameplay enhancements, and *EX2* offers up a new "system" for your perusal. Augmenting the Combo Gauge and Guard Cancels of *EX* is the so called Excel system. This new element allows you to cancel any attack for a certain period of time. By pressing differing levels of punch and kick simultaneously, you can keep attacking as long as the opponent is receiving or guarding your attack. Whether this system pleases or infuriates the more fanatical *SF* fans is a question that can only be answered in time.

EX2 should be in Japanese arcades as you read this, with imminent US and PlayStation releases forthcoming. Look to *Gamer's Republic* for future updates on what is almost certain to be an awesome addition to one of the longest running game series in history.



By Dave Halverson

Although I've been playing video games religiously since bringing home an Atari 5200, I'm relatively new to PC gaming. In fact, until I witnessed Voodoo 2 acceleration I had little interest in keyboard controls and small beige monitors. I was perfectly satisfied with my console games. After all, a character driven action, platform, and adventure junky like myself is hard-pressed to find the equivalent on PC, right? Wrong. Suddenly I'm surrounded with such games! *Space Circus*, *Gex*, *Rayman 2*, and the spectacle you see here are all in development and all drop-dead gorgeous character driven games as at home on PC as they are on console. Speaking of characters, you're probably looking at these and wondering if I'm smoking paint, but I'm telling you, seeing this game in motion... is a visual banquet.

Picking up where we left off last month, here's some more Q&A with the game's creators. They're speaking about how Ubi Soft's proprietary 3D integration tool and modular, scalable engine puts creative control in the hands of the designers rather than the programmers...

GR: Does any other company use a similar proprietary 3D-integration tool as yourselves?

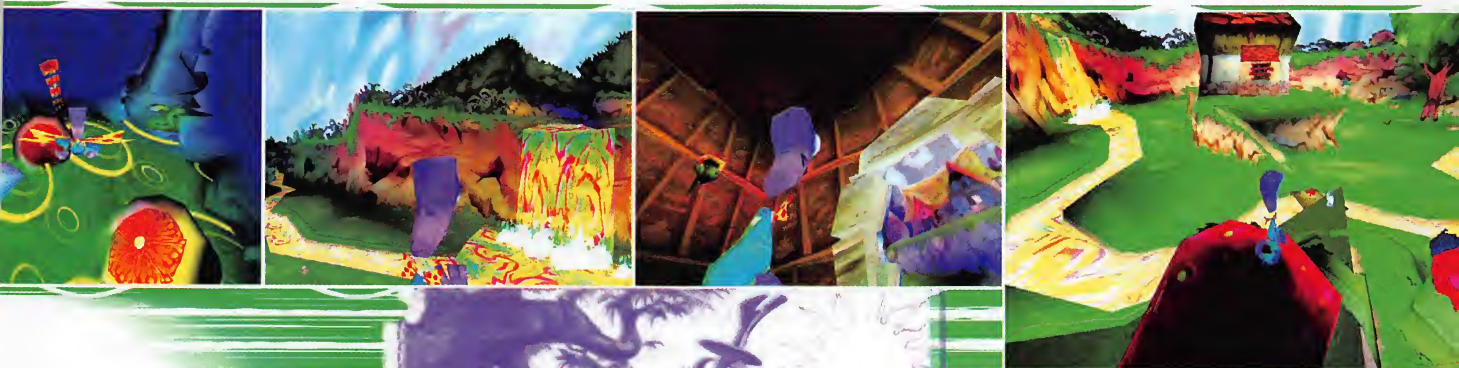
UbiSoft: Not to our knowledge, with the possible exception of Nintendo.

tonic trouble

...take two!

This month, we hear from UbiSoft. Coming soon...the game!





GR: How does this new technology affect the characters?

UbiSoft: In a game like *Mario 64*, the characters other than Mario are all one-dimensional behaviorally; they may attack, but they cannot change their mode of attack, facial expression or actions. In *Tonic Trouble* all of the characters react differently at different times. Instead of having one character that repeatedly makes a face at the main character, for example, the character will continuously change its actions and facial expressions. It may chase, run away, jump, scare, etc., according to the situation.

GR: How does this new technology affect the game environment?

UbiSoft: All the graphical environments have an added dimension, and players can interact with the backgrounds. For example, in other games, characters who fly have no point of reference to the ground. In *Tonic Trouble*, they have a full view of the ground while they are in the air, and this gives the player sensations that cannot be achieved with simpler graphics. The backgrounds also contain secret passages, and sometimes the player must make some part of the background move to go forward or explode obstacles. Backgrounds are used to give both playability and visual sensation.

GR: How does this new technology affect the gameplay?

UbiSoft: This new engine allows interactivity and freedom of movement beyond anything seen before in gaming. Gamers can go absolutely anywhere in an environment. In addition, characters take on a life of their own, appearing and reappearing throughout the game depending on the player's actions. Characters don't exist simply for Ed to run into; they exist independently. There is a character named The Nut, for example, who loves to sit on flowers. He is doing this even before Ed meets him, and Ed must figure out how to use Nut's odd habit to help him open a secret trap door. This is the first time that technology has allowed this level of interactivity in a game.

Dave gets the last word:

Join me again when I actually get to experience *Tonic Trouble* for myself and see if it's as revolutionary as it sounds. It certainly looks to be judging by the demos we've seen, but as always, playing is believing. **f**



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turok 2

More on Iguana's epic sequel is uncovered!

We talk to Project Leader Dave Dienstbier about lighting, levels and killing monkeys...

CONTINUING OUR MONTHLY UPDATE AND BUILDING UP TO OUR EXTENSIVE PLAYTEST OF *TUROK 2* IN A FUTURE ISSUE, FOR THIS MONTH, GAMERS' REPUBLIC CHATTED BRIEFLY WITH DAVID DIENSTBIER, THE LEAD PROGRAMMER OF *TUROK 2*, DIRECT FROM IGUANA BASE CAMP IN AUSTIN, TEXAS. WE REVEAL SOME MORE OF THE GAME'S FEATURES AS WE CHAT ABOUT THE EXTRA DEATH ANIMATIONS, LIGHTING AND MONSTERS ROAMING THE LOST LAND. NEXT TIME, OTHER MEMBERS OF THE *TUROK 2* TEAM DETAIL THEIR EXPERTISE, BUT FOR NOW, LET'S CHECK IN WITH MR. DIENSTBIER AND THE LIGHTING ALGORITHMS HE'S MOST PROUD OF...



REAL-TIME LIGHTING AND MUTANT HYBRIDS

Gamers' Republic: Can you talk briefly about the lighting in *Turok 2*?

David Dienstbier: Basically, *Turok 2* has an all new lighting feature. This involves not only environmental lighting but dynamic light sourcing as well.

What players are going to see in *Turok 2* as opposed to *Turok* is a lot more subtle shading. You're going to see rooms that basically have shadows casting across the floor where it recesses. Very, very natural and realistic. A lot of the games out there with lighting, shadows and stuff have very harsh lighting and it's either completely in the dark or fully lit. In *Turok 2*, the characters are going in and out of very subtle, gradual shadowed areas. You're going to find very distinct differences between the way that an exterior area is lit versus an interior area. You're going to find differences between the way an interior area with a window going outside is lit versus an interior with no light source other than a stove in the corner. You're also going to find that the lighting is going to vary drastically from level to level in the game because every level in this game is completely unique.

GR: We saw the pulsating alien level shots which were very dark and brooding. I take that there's going to be specific creatures for every single level as well.

DD: Correct. For every single level, because it takes place in a different part of the Lost Land, you're actually in another [creature's] home. In one level, you're in the home of the Pur-linn for example, which is this kind of marshy swampy area where they've got their own style of structures built and everything.

GR: Is that the first level or is this a subsequent level?

DD: The first level takes place in a place called the Port of Adia. It's a port city that's been

besieged by the dinosaur army. Dinosaurs are basically genetically-engineered dinosaur men. And they are kind of the staple of the main bad guys ground troops. And they keep Raptors with them and other assorted creatures.

GR: They're a little bit like the Natives but with more reptilian...

DD: They're completely reptilian. They're not men. They're bipedal, scaly, dinosaur men. There are three different types of them to face in Adia. Each of them has totally unique animations. They run differently, some of them are armed, some are not. We've got one breed that's descended from Raptors so they're skinnier; a little bit more frenzied in their appearance.

GR: So there's a load of hybrid activity going on...

DD: Right. And then we've got a type that's called the Entrails which are descended from T-Rexes so they're bigger, meatier, and heavier. They have blasters that they carry with them, they're far more dangerous from a distance. The Raptoids have to get in your face. And the way that we deal with creatures getting in your face is that they're faster than they were in *Turok*. There are a lot of creatures in *Turok 2* that you can't outrun. So if you don't turn and fight, you're screwed. Cut into ribbons. And Raptors will run you down. If you try to run from a pack of Raptors, you're a dead man.

GR: You say a pack of Raptors. How many enemies do you think you'll be able to comfortably fit on screen at once?

DD: It varies from the location on the level, and on how much is going on at once.

GR: So if it's an open field, you could have quite a lot?

DD: We've got areas in the game where you're pretty much constantly being attacked by more enemies than you were in *Turok*. But there are areas in the game where you are swarmed by enemies, when they are everywhere, as many as ten or twelve enemies at once.

GR: Good Lord.

DD: Yeah, it's a lot. So it varies from level to level, from environment to environment, from enemy type to enemy type. Well now I've kinda strayed off our lighting talk!

GR: Yes!



Face the reptilian denizens of a decaying coastal town. Engage them in automatic gunfire...

As you can see from the exclusive shots littering these pages, the graphical showcase for the Nintendo 64 that is *Turok 2* is more than a little impressive. Those responsible (top left) were herded into Iguana's own gym and forced to pose for the Republic camera, along with Mr. Dienstbier himself (top right).



DD: Let me expound a little bit more on that. All of the characters in the game throw real-time shadows. The real-time shadows are affected by light sources in the environment. So if you fire a rocket at a creature and you miss but it scrapes by it, his shadow on the floor will actually move in reaction to the rocket's light. For example, our new improved mini-gun, called the Firestorm Cannon. It's an energy based Mini-gun of sorts, it's much bigger, much heavier, much cooler looking and every projectile that is shoots throws a light source off it so you get these really cool *Aliens*-style strobe effects. In some areas, the only light source you have is from your muzzle flash and impact. If you purposefully shoot around a guy up on a ledge that's, say, lobbing grenades down at you, you'll see the shadow dancing around from side to side, strobing back and forth in relation to where the bullets are going. It's awesome. We have torch light flicker, water casts reflective lights that dance all over the ceiling and walls around it. I've never seen a game on N64 that looks even close to as realistic as what *Turok 2* looks like.

GR: That, I think, is just what gamers are waiting for.

DD: It's easy to go the cartoon route. It's a lot more challenging to create something that's really convincingly realistic. And this is exactly what we're going for. Now that doesn't mean we don't take artistic liberties with the creature designs and weaponry and you make exceptions. But the end result is nothing short of spectacular.

selves. Then we had the explosive death anims where they go flying through the air. All these things are obviously still in our game. We've now added an extreme death class. An extreme death basically means that large portions of the creature's body are going to be blown off. You're going to see some serious deaths. We've also started doing what I call smart offense in that our weapon design this time around is a lot less "this one blows up bigger than the last one, this one blows up bigger than the last one." We still have an escalation in terms of the effective power of the weapons, but certain weapons don't affect enemies in the game. For example, I think it's pretty common knowledge that we have a tranquilizer gun in the game. Now, if you're fighting a Raptor, it may take two darts to put the Raptor down. Okay, it doesn't kill the Raptor, it just knocks 'em out. Now, does that have much appeal to a player? It's not as much fun to tranquilize a Raptor as it might be to blow his head off. However, if the Raptor is standing on a pressure plate that opens a door that let's you to a ledge up above where there is a secret or a mission objective or what not, it might be worth your while to use the tranquilizer.

GR: So there's a lot more strategy involved...

DD: It's basically a way to make working your way through a level more fun and challenging. Basically, you also have to be careful that you balance situations like that in terms of it being something the player must do or whether or not it's something that the player can opt to do. Because what happens when you don't get the tranquilizer gun out and blows the Raptor's head off? Is he trapped in the level? That wouldn't be fun for anybody. You just have to be careful and watch the way people play. You know, one of the very first things that everybody screamed about was "why can't I shoot the monkey?! I can't kill the monkey, I want to kill the monkey!". If you see it in *Turok 2*, you can kill it.

GR: You could kill that damned monkey with the Particle Cannon, though! If you were quick!

DD: Yeah! Well this time, if you see a creature in the game that's not already dead, you can kill it. And actually, there may be a benefit to that. I won't say anymore...

We would like to thank David Dienstbier and the *Turok 2* team for their help and assistance in this feature. More next month!

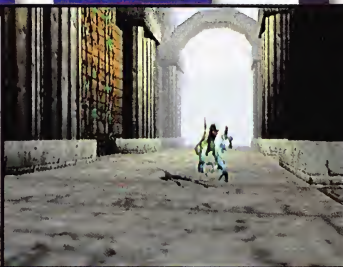
GIBBING, FIREPOWER AND MONKEY CULLING

GR: We heard you were working on a number of intensive ways for the bad guys to depart the Lost Land...

DD: So you want to talk about nasty death animations? Well, we don't make *Turok* or *Turok 2* bloody just for the sake of having it in the game. What we



try to do is we try to create an animation or a situation or something that the player is going to see that really creates like a benchmark kind of occasion. They see something and go; "that was so cool, I can't believe that, make him do that again". What we've done with death anims in *T2* is we've added a new class of death animations. In *Turok*, we had the normal kind of death anims where the guys just kind of go "uunghh!!", and then we had the death anims that would happen when humans were running; they kind of wipe out and spill all over them-



More to come in future issues, including interviews and discussions with key members of the team, and the latest on the game's development.

Next issue, we prepare to carve into the dinosaurs! A full report on the E3 playable demo...

PREVIEW

1. A SMALL PEEK INTO THE ARRAY OF FORTHCOMING SOFTWARE IN DEVELOPMENT AND OUT SOON.

2. A BRIEF SYNOPSIS PROVIDES YOU WITH ESSENTIAL AND ENTERTAINING FEATURES ON THE GAME'S MAIN ATTRACTIONS.

3. LOOK FOR MORE DETAILED COVERAGE OF THESE TITLES IN FUTURE ISSUES OF GAMERS' REPUBLIC.

CRASH BANDICOOT 3

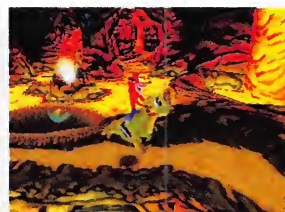
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG PUBLISHER: SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AVAILABLE: FALL '98



Sitting around the conference table at Sony Interactive with Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin towards the tail end of production on *Crash 2*, we spoke of how sad it would be when Naughty Dog's contract with Universal ran out (Universal pretty much owns *Crash*) leaving any further Bandicoot escapades in the hands of unknowing hands. I walked away thinking perhaps *Crash 2* would be the last installment from the original makers, much in the way I had to with *Earthworm Jim*, after the initial Shiny break up (can one's soul endure such heart break?). Much to my surprise (and I don't have the whole story yet) production on *Crash 3: Warped* began shortly after. I guess the worldwide success of *Crash* and *Crash 2* (both were huge hits in Japan) helped



work things out because here we are, just a few months away from yet another Bandicoot bonanza. Judging by these shots you're likely thinking that *Crash 3* is just more of the same leaping and bounding (which wouldn't be bad). However, besides the fact that *Crash 3: Warped* revolves around time-travel, you can now play as Coco Bandicoot as well as Crash himself, and the environments are more wide open. There are additional gameplay facets about *Crash 3* yet to be unveiled that are completely new and unique as well. These will be revealed in our *Crash 3* extended feature coming next month. ⚡

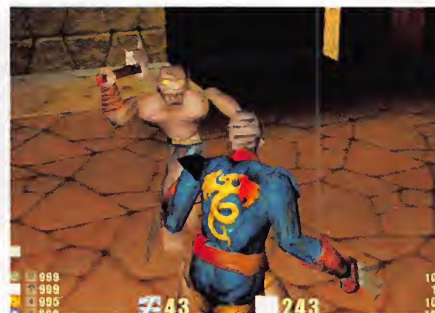
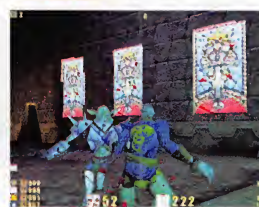


DARK VENGEANCE

DEVELOPER: REALITY BYTES PUBLISHER: GT INTERACTIVE AVAILABLE: FALL '98



Other than Eidos' *Tomb Raider* series, a wholly absorbing third-person perspective 3D PC adventure has been virtually unheard of, but somewhere within the slew of upcoming titles, one is bound to rise from the depths. That one might be Reality Bytes' *Dark Vengeance*. Set in a shadowy land plagued by a looming eclipse, you play as one of five selectable characters. Miles from being original, your mission is to eliminate the underlings that now freely lurk about and ultimately revoke the celestial curse that haunts your homeland. But aside from its dry plot, *Dark Vengeance* has the potential to be a deeply intense, atmospheric experience. Forget about finding keys and unlocking doors, the gameplay will be founded on well-balanced objectives, quick reflexes, and strong character development. Bearing a high degree of replay value, each character will have their own personal story-line, but each individual tale ties back to the same objective. Ultimately, what may be the games' winning hand is its multi-player option. The game will support up to 32 players via LANs and the Internet, and is touted to compete with the likes of *Quake 2* in intensity (quite a bold statement I must say). Although we had mere videotape footage to go by, it's safe to say that the game at least looks very impressive. ☹

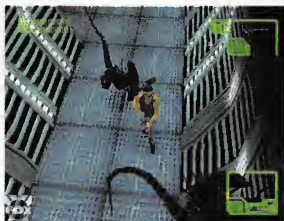


ALIEN RESURRECTION

DEVELOPER: ARGONAUT PUBLISHER: FOX INTERACTIVE AVAILABLE: AUGUST '98



Who can forget the threatening ambience of *Alien Trilogy*? Creeping through dimly lit dank metallic corridors, a dense layer of tension preceding every corner. Perfectly orchestrated music that always added credibility to the already unnerving atmosphere. Seething hisses permeating every wall, the scratching scuttle of a face hugger hiding in the dark, chills shooting up your spine... Well, with *Alien Resurrection*, Argonaut Software intends to improve upon this already highly effective formula, and if they pull it off, we're surely in for another terrifying installment of sci-fi horror. Relinquishing the pixel syndrome that *Alien Trilogy* suffered from, the game features fully interactive polygonal 3D worlds and a third-person perspective that provides a higher level of suspense (not that it isn't high enough already). Apparently, the game will span across 13 levels, allow players to select from a list of five available characters (although this is not confirmed), is based closely on the movie, boasts a networked multi-player option (PC only), and will include high-quality CG sequences to break up the action. Although it looks impressive, whether it can surpass *Trilogy's* impact remains in the dark. ☹



RAYMAN 2

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PUBLISHER: UBISOFT AVAILABLE: 4th QUARTER



Rayman 2, thought to be scrapped in lieu of Ubi Soft's upcoming 3D epic *Tonic Trouble*, is back on track after over a year hiatus. A blessing in disguise perhaps, or did Ubi Soft purposely wait for advanced acceleration? Either way, Rayman is about to enter the world of 3D gaming in high style. Duplicating the lush, surreal forests and arduous platform challenges of the original (a cross platform sensation appearing on every major console), in 3D is going to be a formidable job, but judging by what they've accomplished of late, I'm quite confident Ubi's up to the task. I'm also hopeful that the game's theme (though perhaps a tad light-hearted for the PC crowd) and amazing score will remain somewhat true to the original, which I would consider one of the decade's most memorable 2D platform romps. It isn't known whether the *Rayman* team will be using the amazing new proprietary 3D engine developed for *Tonic Trouble*, but given the major expenditure of time and resources to perfect it, I reckon it's a safe bet that they are. We'll hopefully have a play at E3 and update you in the next issue. As for whether these three screens are actual grabs directly from the game or not, the Republic is split. But even if they're not, it's great that an argument can be made at all. All that remains now, is cranking up those crazed tunes and twitching slightly in hypnotic and trance-like rhythm... ☹



SPYRO THE DRAGON

PUBLISHER: SCEA AVAILABLE: SEPT '98



DEVELOPER: INSOMNIAC

We join *Spyro The Dragon* with the band wagon already in progress... I'm told that *Spyro The Dragon* will be the game that folks will be talking about at this year's E3 and long after, as it is being touted as a PlayStation technical marvel, boasting certified technological innovations, superb game design, unique play mechanics, and Hollywood-style glamour (although I find that phrase frightening) including music by Stuart Copeland of 80s boppers, *The Police* fame. Judging by these screen shots, they've every right to stake such claims. Never before have we peeped so far in a free-roaming environment on the



PlayStation without a trace of fog. All the while, get a load of the extreme texture quality and *Aladdin* meets J. R. R. Tolkien character design.

Spyro looks to have all the makings of a legendary PS franchise. I can't wait to play it, and will get back with some in-depth insight as this game is directly up my alley. There's sure to be more to report in the August issue E3 coverage. ☹

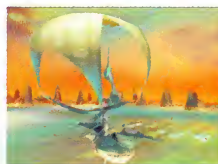


GIANTS

DEVELOPER: PLANET MOON PUBLISHER: INTERPLAY AVAILABLE: FALL '98



It goes without saying that *Giants* is going to be an epic gaming experience. Developed by the MDK Team at the newly founded Planet Moon Studios, *Giants* diabolically mixes action and strategy as it has never been mixed before... The player chooses from three sides; Sea Reapers, the Meccaryn, or the Giant Kabuto in a battle where enemies eat, burn, drown, kidnap, or bury their victims to gain control over a serene (and surreal) paradise deep inside a beautiful nebula. This mechanic employs an endless array of tactics as you can manipulate opponents against each other or even tap the resources of a fourth, completely separate race of inhabitants including (gulp) munching the little suckers for nourishment. "We really let our imaginations run wild when we began to put the story and game design together" said Nick Bruty. "We feel that we've encompassed all of the important elements of gameplay from creating complicated strategies that must consider two opponents and the challenge of diverse terrain to the extreme intensity and action of the heat of battle". Sounds absolutely ass kickin' to me. *Giants* thumps into stores in the Fall of '98. Look for more on this revolutionary title in issues to come. ☹



ADRENIX

DEVELOPER: DIGITAL DIALECT PUBLISHER: PIE AVAILABLE: FALL '98

Imagine playing *Descent* but within expansive environments resembling *Duke Nukem's* racy urban theme (complete with porn theaters and sexually suggestive billboards) and you will already have a good idea of *Adrenix's* *Blade Runner*-esque appeal. The game stars Scott Griffin, a retired pilot/assassin who is now relying on the forces he once stalked to help him uncover the mystery behind the kidnapping of his girlfriend, Maria. Apparently, Maria's kidnappers are using her as the test subject of various unethical experiments with a new intoxicant named 'Adrenix'. Although in its early state it is visually inferior to *Forsaken* (by a large margin I might add), the game does have more expansive environments and a deeper story-line that unfolds as you progress through its 23 missions. *Adrenix* will feature single player mission-based levels as well as a networked multi-player option via a LAN, modem or the Internet. What else is new?

**ALEX BUILDS HIS FARM**

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PUBLISHER: UBISOFT AVAILABLE: FALL '98

Alex is an inquisitive farmer's son. He can build hen houses and learn about how eggs are made. But only when his father leaves for market. Ooh, those chickens are packed tight. They must be cold. And their feet are twisted. What a lot of squarking! Barns? That's where the moo-cows stay before they go into the big concrete building. Alex is puzzled. He hears zaps and mooing and a red liquid pouring out of this structure into drains. He'll investigate there later. Alex meets all sorts of interesting animals. Oh look! It's Miss Oink the pig. Over there is Shep the sheepdog. Ooh, Shep, don't lick yourself there! But Alex is a sad little fellow. He's made out of plastic and has prongs for hands. But that doesn't stop him uncovering all manner of fantastic secrets... Look, here's a big hut. What does it say, Alex? "Farm machinery." Er, are you sure you want to go in there? Okay, but watch out for that combine harvester... Alex? Alex?! No, don't stick your hand in there... Ewww.

**ASTEROIDS 3D**

DEVELOPER: ACTIVISION PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION AVAILABLE: FALL '98

The prospect of blowing large meteors into smaller rocks (thus making them spin and plummet through space at faster rates), and then exploding them into smaller rocks before vaporizing the fastest pebbles, and then dodging an assortment of alien ships has a certain old-school appeal to it. And so it should, the game originally came out in 1979 for the Atari 2600 and was subsequently redone for each home system throughout the 80s. And now is the turn of PlayStation and PC owners to view a top-down screen and warp a triangular cruiser around asteroids. But there's a cunning 'next generation' twist to the experience. Everything's in "vivid 3D graphics [with] expansive playing areas". So essentially, the graphics aren't white vectored triangles, but texture-mapped ones. Also added are "multiple modes of play" and CD sound; not exactly 'extra' features, but Activision hope to gather fans of the original plus newbies in their quest to revamp elderly games.

**CAESAR III**

DEVELOPER: SIERRA PUBLISHER: SIERRA AVAILABLE: FALL '98

When a game sells 500,000 copies, it's time apparently to make another one. The award winning *Caesar II* is one such game, and now we have *Caesar III*. Another strategic simulation, *Caesar III* gives the player the unique thrill of ruling over and maintaining their own Roman-era city. That would be fun, right kids?! According to Sierra Studios, *Caesar III* "offers multiple gameplay objectives in a richer, truer environment". Compared with its predecessor, *CII* differs in mostly in two major areas. *CII* had you monitoring your territory through separate sub-screens for countryside, city and battle. Now, your entire province is shown on one large map, greatly streamlining the play. Also, most of your actions as player are immediately visible on screen, as opposed to the previous title's use of report screens to convey changes in environment. Intricately detailed buildings and a new musical further the cause of sequel enhancement.

**COLONY WARS 2**

DEVELOPER: PSYGNOSIS PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS AVAILABLE: FALL '98

Psygnosis' visually stunning deep space shooter is about to receive the full-on sequel treatment with *Colony Wars 2: Vengeance*. Mike Ellis, producer of the original *Colony Wars* is shepherding this game through development and has a suite of enhancements planned. Utilizing an upgraded version of their already quite capable 3D engine, *Vengeance* promises to be even more graphically intense. Gameplay should be faster, smoother, and simply more beautiful than ever before. New gameplay ideas include the ability to utilize a grappling hook and large objects to slingshot in different directions and stealing shield energy from enemy ships. Not related to gameplay but still very cool is the addition of a simple texture creator which will allow you to create decals and logos for your ships and alter their overall coloring. *Vengeance* will also feature an improved branching mission structure with even more endings and plot twists. We can't wait for this one.

**COOL BOARDERS 3**

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: SISA AVAILABLE: FALL '98

Can you believe the third installment in this series is already well into production? They're just cranking them out. This time around the 3D engine has seen a complete overhaul, with enhanced software effects and an increased frame rate. In *Cool Boarders 3*, players can compete in six awesome events across five huge mountain courses which offer the best views this side of the alps. In total, 32 massive courses will provide players with all manner of boarding madness through rocks, bumps, ice, gnarly jumps ("dude!") and deadly cliffs. You'll also have two hidden runs to challenge that are destined to be the most difficult yet seen in a snowboarding game. Use Front Side 540s, Back Side Alley-Oops, Tail grabs and Stiffies on the Half Pipe, Big Air, and Slope Style events to impress your friends. Dual Shock support should make the experience complete! This certainly looks to be graphically more impressive than previous outings to the slopes.



DIABLO 2

DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD PUBLISHER: BLIZZARD AVAILABLE: WINTER '98



As a game that will likely be one of the most exceptional PC titles of '98 (if it makes its aggressive Christmas deadline), Blizzard's *Diablo 2* is positioned to not only outperform its predecessor in every way, but also reestablish its huge popularity on the internet. To add more life to the original's downright eerie yet stagnant environments, the game's engine has been completely overhauled. Expect intricately animated worlds, some stunning visual effects augmented by colored lighting, and an overall attention-to-detail that far surpasses the original. Another dramatic change over the first is in the game's scope. The story will stretch across four unique towns (the original only had one) and each will have its own set of quests. Additionally, five all-new and totally unique character types will be available: The Necromancer, Sorceress, Amazon, Barbarian, and Paladin. Plus! Battle.net will support more players with a pawn shop to barter items on-line.



EXTREME TACTICS

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: MEDIA STATION AVAILABLE: JUNE '98



How much more extreme can a real-time strategy game get? It is hard to imagine with the overwhelming number of such titles hitting the PC shelves these days, but *Extreme Tactics*, developed by Media Station, manages to fill a niche. Much like Eidos' upcoming *War Zone 2100*, the game empowers players to alter their vehicles, but to a much greater degree. Not only will have control over a vehicle's design, but also various levels of AI can be programmed into each unit (like a toned down *Carnage Heart* on the PS) allowing you to add that extra personal touch. Additionally, vehicles must be designed to tackle the game's varying terrain (special wheel units for rocks and hover technology for crossing water). This should keep the replay value unusually high, especially when playing a network game. Fans of the real time strategy genre looking for a deeper level of gameplay may have reason to rejoice when *Extreme Tactics* comes out this June.



G-SHOCK

DEVELOPER: KONAMI PUBLISHER: KONAMI AVAILABLE: FALL '98



He's an underwater explorer and marine biologist. He must be French. And while the main hero in this swimming adventure is of undisclosed nationality, he is called Jean Cave. A good start! Continuing the oceanic theme which *Treasures of the Deep* piloted, Cave plays the part of a no-nonsense adventurer and archeologist (a man of many talents) exploring the tropical island of Coussess in search of sacred burial grounds to plunder and rape. No spiky pit traps or spear-wielding natives are located, but a tale of an enormous sunken ship called 'The Matilda' is told. Not 'The Behemoth', 'The Matilda'. Now Cave knows there's plenty of dubloons ready for the taking, but doesn't know where the wreck is. Cue an eccentric 88 year old ex-passenger who's willing to help. All they need now is money (Cave obviously hasn't acquired the plundering skills of his fellow archeologists), so 3D underwater adventures are embarked upon...



HALF-LIFE

DEVELOPER: VALVE PUBLISHER: SIERRA AVAILABLE: SUMMER '98



When you get over the initial shock of seeing a new first-person shooter on the PC, you'll be pleased to know Sierra's first offering in this genre isn't just another *Quake* clone. Now, *Quake II* is a groovy game, but the shortcomings in single player mode can hardly be ignored (but who really plays *QII* alone?). Valve, the developers behind *Half-Life*, hope to offer something new to first-person shooters by actually treating their title like an interactive movie (with a lot of killing, of course). You'll actually be able to alter the course of the game by involving yourself in the numerous storyline real-time cinematics (by helping, or ignoring a fallen friend for example). Beyond a deep storyline and advanced AI, Valve also focused on an incredible graphical engine (which is based on the original *Quake*, with more than a few enhancements) that features interactive backgrounds and noteworthy character animation thanks to their special skeletal animation system. Keen!



HEAVY GEAR 2

DEVELOPER: ACTIVISION PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION AVAILABLE: NA



Activision's big mech game was evidently big enough to spawn a sequel, and here it is. The stunningly titled *Heavy Gear II* (aah... it's a sequel... it has a II after it! Yes, I understand now!) has you leading a "special operations strike force" with the mission of "spearheading the invasion of a neighboring planet". Now this is great because it gives you the opportunity to pilot some heapin' hunka burnin' mech across swamps, frigid arctic zones, volcanic areas and urban base locations, in fact, whole load of extra terrain than the first could offer. Following the tried and true mission based formula, *Heavy Gear II* features multiple scenarios of enemy destruction and sabotage. You'll be able to send complex commands to other mech pilots in your struggle for victory. Designed to take full advantage of current 3D accelerator technology, this could be the best looking mech game yet and will certainly be a vast improvement over its predecessor.



HERETIC 2

DEVELOPER: RAVEN PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION AVAILABLE: WINTER '98



Among the many 3D adventures coming from Activision, one that surely will stir up some emotion is *Heretic 2*. Set many years after the end of the original *Heretic*, the sequel launches you into a continent tightly gripped by a mysterious epidemic. Presenting perpetual environments that convincingly animate (the water effects look amazing), gorgeous textures, and absolutely insane lighting and particle effects, the game takes full advantage of the latest in Voodoo2 technology. This massively improved sequel will not only use the *Quake 2* engine, but will also feature a third-person viewpoint (with various camera modes including a possible fixed viewpoint) making the experience much different than that of the original. And what game of this pedigree would be complete without multi-player support? Disappointing; so we expect *Heretic 2* to deliver awesome deathmatch and cooperative play experiences. This is another one that we can't wait to play.



KARTIA

DEVELOPER: ATLUS PUBLISHER: ATLUS AVAILABLE: SUMMER '98

From the creators of the infamous *Megami Tensei* series and *Persona* comes *Kartia*, the epic real-time battle simulation game. With character designs by Amano Yoshitaka of *Final Fantasy* fame, each detailed personality should almost certainly be unique and memorable. Exciting battle options are available to you using the intense Kartia magic. Freeze entire rivers for your armies to clamber (and then skate) over, or raise and lower the altitude of the terrain to gain a tactical advantage. The huge battle scenes can consist of armies comprised of over 20 characters. There's even two intertwining storylines spanning over 50 hours of gameplay complete with loads of incredible CG to entice your eyes! Best of all, you can create your own weapons, armor, magic, even monsters, using the Kartia magic! After all this is done, you can save and trade items with your buddies via memory card. We're anxiously awaiting a final of this one...

**POYPOY 2**

DEVELOPER: KONAMI PUBLISHER: KONAMI AVAILABLE: SUMMER '98

It has blocks, logs, rocks, missiles, ufos and an extremely simple premise; "throw objects away unsparingly"; which is essentially what the name translates to from the original Japanese. This actual throwing takes place, just like the first, in a number of 'natural' environments (grass, desert, and, er, a metal shed), as well as an all-new world... the Moon! With low gravity! Wheee! The entire experience plays exactly like *Bomberman*, but with one important difference: There's total freeroaming. Touted as the most fun you can have with four people without taking your clothes off, *Poy-poy 2* improves on the first in a number of key areas. Firstly, there's more characters. Secondly, there's more moves this time (throwing, kicking, punching and other more special attacks to name a few). Thirdly, there's a story mode, just like the new *Bomberman* games. And finally? The arenas are 3D with height to each stage, leading to cunning projectile madness.

**KENSAI**

DEVELOPER: KONAMI PUBLISHER: KONAMI AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER '98

There's bound to be a sizable chunk of PlayStation-owning folk who crave the slightly different punch-punch-kick fighting experience of "Model 2" style games. With this in mind, Konami have spent an inordinate amount of time developing *Kensai*, grabbing all the best parts of Sega-influenced beat-'em-ups, adding a block button in addition to the punch, kick and throw, and introducing suitably tough combatants. Talking of pugilists, there's an initial eight fighters (this number rises to 20 once the hidden and boss characters are revealed), and all feature extremely similar-looking moves to other fighting games of this ilk. Except their names are less cool. Unless you'd rather wrestle using a man called Douglas. A yet-unnamed graphical smoothing technology is set to minimise glitching (and hopefully erase the unrealistic joints the slightly angular characters sport). Throw in the patented *Tekken* hit smoke, improve those backgrounds and Konami are in business.

**PSYBADEK**

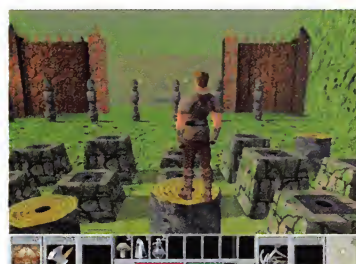
DEVELOPER: PSYGNOSIS PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS AVAILABLE: FALL '98

Snowboards are never going to float. That's why we need video games like *Psybadek* to give us a taste of what breaking the inexorable flow of science would be like. Inspired by anime, the characters in *Psybadek* ride antigravity boards called 'hoverdeks' which transport its rider to fantastical speeds. Floating through open 3D areas, fanatical racing skills are necessary to survive devilishly-placed obstacles scattered about four huge zones (Mountain, Jungle, Desert, and the Underworld). Armed with an array of weapons and power-ups, platforming action and puzzle solving fuses with the racing as enemies and bosses litter the zones. The 'hoverdeks' can be used to perform awesome stunts where the technique is heightened by the futuristic touch to the boards. Constantly in motion, the intensity of flying through the winding landscapes is a perennial adrenaline rush. There is no deliberate course to follow; just find a path that looks exciting...

**KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY**

DEVELOPER: SIERRA PUBLISHER: SIERRA AVAILABLE: FALL '98

Opening the next chapter in the *King's Quest* saga, Sierra is preparing *King's Quest: Mask of Eternity* to continue the rich story that made the original a hit. Written by the talented Roberta Williams, *Mask of Eternity* tells a tale of a young man dealing with a magical catastrophe in the kingdom of Davenport. Shattered by the magic, the Mask of Eternity is scattered throughout the kingdom, and the capacious Connor is the only inhabitant physically able to retrieve the relic. In a new twist on the *King's Quest* journey, action now becomes part of the puzzle solving as Connor makes his way through the vast 3D fantasy world of Davenport. The tweaked interface allows you easier movement in the complex environments, which can be viewed both in first and third person. While *Mask of Eternity* is placing a unique angle on the series, Sierra promises this *King's Quest* will thrill existing fans, and perhaps introduce whole legions of newcomers.

**STARSHIP TROOPERS**

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: MICROPROSE AVAILABLE: FALL '98

Disappointed that one of the decade's most epic sci-fi adventures will likely never see a sequel, I hope more than ever that the game (based on the Robert Heinlein novel and the epic Verhoeven masterwork) does the *Troopers* name justice. Although this lone screen depicts only a flat grassy planet and a spattering of the arachnid threat (I don't think they'll be quite as many as the film had), the game description sounds promising. You play as an armored trooper (in the mobile infantry of course) that partakes in orbital combat drops. Using a variety of devastating weaponry you have the honor of defending earth against the arachnid threat; i.e. you get to blow some big bugs all to hell! Succeed and you'll have the opportunity to accept promotions and perhaps even command a battalion, like Ratcheck's Roughnecks!! Other features include a Dynamic mission generator and multi-player capabilities. I'm all over this one, so stay tuned for further details.

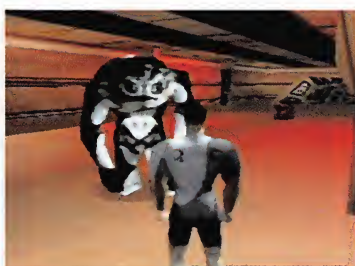


SURVIVOR

DEVELOPER: KONAMI PUBLISHER: KONAMI AVAILABLE: 4TH QUARTER '98



Nintendo 64 owners are set to nibble a small crumb of the action-adventure pie thanks to Konami's answer to Lara Croft, a yet-unnamed fellow squeezed into the tightest lycra jumpsuit and forced to explore a vast ship containing numerous biospheres. There's the 'desert' biosphere (hint; substitute the word 'biosphere' for 'level'), 'arctic tundra' biosphere, and the one you see below, the 'extremely brown' biosphere. Where our new hero differs from Lara Croft is that his bulges are located lower down his body, and he's a genetically-engineered humanoid created by an alien race named the Fayes. This biospheric ship is sinking slowly into ooze, and lycra boy must traverse, third-person-camera-over-the-shoulder style, through this stricken craft (featuring impressive lighting and less than impressive floor textures) searching for a mate, using an energy weapon to kill a host of drones and lumbering black-and-white versions of Sweetums from *The Muppets*.



SYPHON FILTER

DEVELOPER: SISA PUBLISHER: SONY AVAILABLE: FALL '98



The very thought of biological warfare gives us the creepy jeebies around here, and it would sure as hell be a lot worse than dying in the flash of a nuclear blast. Imagine having a horrible biological toxin enter your bloodstream and feeling it work its way through your body, reaching the brain and causing the slow death. That would be absolutely terrible. As secret agent Gabriel Logan, you have the rather unenviable task of stopping biological terrorism from reaching our hallowed land. Not only that, but you must also infiltrate the organization responsible for the deadly virus and learn its secrets. Far worse than being a discovered virus, it turns out to be a synthesized top secret biological weapon that has the capability of killing selectively. A frightening proposition to say the least. Millions of precious lives are in your hands, as usual. You're going to save them, right? You better, you low life. The programmers at Sony's own in house studio will see to it.



TRESPASSER

DEVELOPER: DREAMWORKS PUBLISHER: DREAMWORKS AVAILABLE: FALL '98



Sure, *Trespasser* looks beautiful, but so do many PC games; the captivation is in the physics engine. In *Trespasser*, objects reflect the illusion of a center of gravity, reacting to the touch and impact as they would in a true physical world. In a demonstration we saw, an Uzi was fired at a hard-drive, and the unit teetered and jumped around completely dependant on the intensity and placement of the force - a revolutionary and evocative scene. Incorporating aspects of *The Lost World*, the story to *Trespasser* shows us an island that is home to a large number of roaming dinosaurs. Moving with a disturbing, visceral presence, the creatures pitch and sway as only a living being with such mass would. Provoke these mammoth beasts, and they react according to a number of factors. So convincing are the movements, the developers say when they see one with a glitch, the dinosaur looks sick, freaking them out. Imagine the final game itself...



TURBO PROP RACING

DEVELOPER: SCE PUBLISHER: SONY AVAILABLE: SUMMER '98



Rapid Racer was released over in the land of tea and scones many, many months ago (we played an almost complete version at last year's E3). Sony have attempted to spice up the title immeasurably by changing the name. Yep, apparently *Rapid Racer* wasn't catchy enough. A turbo craft is obviously faster than a rapid one. Having played the game at last year's ECTS, we're ready to see a much improved version of the game. Yes, it may look all silky smooth and zip along at 60 fps with a lack of pixel textures, but the water just doesn't look and undulate like the wet stuff; more like the contents of a sewage pipe. And there's slopes in some tracks. Slopes... in water... hmmm. Add random collision when you hit anything larger than a pebble (the boat either powers through jutting objects, or runs aground with a sickening scrape) and you've got the game's problems rather nicely summed up. We want these fixed before us Americans get our hands on this one.

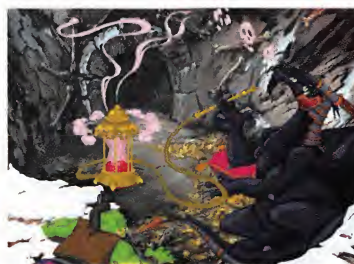


WARCRAFT ADVENTURES

DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD PUBLISHER: BLIZZARD AVAILABLE: SUMMER '98



Here's something we thought we would never see; an adventure game spin off of a real-time strategy title. *Warcraft Adventures* is just that, and a sign that the real-time strategy genre has grown large enough to support ancillary titles. Designed to dovetail with future entries in the series, *Warcraft Adventures* story is a direct continuation of *Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal*. You'll play as an Orc (Thrall) who has spent his entire life as a slave to the Humans. This, of course, is not good, so you must escape, destined to lead the Orcish clans against the Humans and return the Horde to dominance. *Warcraft Adventures* promises intense, puzzle-filled gameplay spanning 60 unique locations set within Azeroth. 100 overworked artists endeavored to bring you over 40,000 frames of character animation! And best of all, Peter Cullen (the voice of Optimus Prime!) is among the group of talented voice actors, including Clancy Brown and Tony Jay. Strike back at the 'oomans!!



WARZONE

DEVELOPER: PUMPKIN PUBLISHER: EIDOS AVAILABLE: FALL '98



Thankfully, Eidos' *War Zone 2100* throws a curve at the real-time strategy genre and it may be unique enough to entice a large audience; even among the excess abundance of upcoming games that are similar in style. The game allows you to research into various military technologies and thereafter 'personalize' your units with upgraded weapons, armor and abilities. Additionally, WZ will pack a strong visual punch with its 3D terrain and units (much like *WarGames* minus the thick fog). But aside from these features, the gameplay appears to be a bit too comparable to everything we have already played. Tap into oil for resource materials, construct and fortify bases, manufacture vehicles and eventually skirmish against the computer in campaign mode or another human in a multi-player match. But regardless of the genre's tired (read: comatose) formula, this one might be a good choice for anyone wanting a real-time strategy game with a more depth.





you spine

The first 32-bit Earthworm Jim is finally nearing completion.

Vis Interactive Studios hope to continue the success of the world's most famous worm with *Earthworm Jim 3D*. In his first excursion post-16-bit Jim gets knocked unconscious by (what else?) a falling cow. Trapped in the deranged world of his own mind, six enormous levels, each indicative of one area of Jim's fractured psyche, must be traversed in order for Jim to rejoin the real world. Get ready to rock the rockét once again!

In April, Gamers' Republic was given the opportunity to visit Scottish developers, VIS, at their secluded

residence in Dunfermline. A relatively unknown company in gaming circles (having not actually had a game published yet), we imagined that the crack team of programmers with a few surprises up their kilts. After all, Interplay had entrusted VIS to design, create and implement the new *Earthworm Jim 3D* game. We performed a 'freeform' interview to the CEO of VIS, Chris van der Kuyl and Kirk Ewing, Vice President of

Creativity, who's personally overseeing the whole *EWJ 3D* project.

Let the story unfold...



GR: Hi Chris. Okay, can you tell us how long VIS has been around for?

CvdK: VIS kicked off in January 1996. We hit the ground running with about nine people, and we have about 52 today.

GR: How long has Earthworm Jim 3D been in development for?

CvdK: We got the EWJ contract at the very end of 1996, so effectively, you could sort of say between December '96 and January '97.

GR: What previous experience has the EWJ team had?

CvdK: Various diverse sources. Our head of development was also head of the Nintendo 64 development for DMA (another Scottish company), plus other people from DMA as well. One of the team worked for Frontier for a while, which is David Braben's place (Braben is responsible for the creation of the granddaddy of all 3D space simulations, *Elite*), and we have a lot of fresh talent here. We've got people from the comic industry and lots of new graduates. There's four PhDs working on Jim. These guys have written about all sorts of stuff like

Chaos Theory and
Fluid Dynamics,
and all
kinds

have the horse-power of either 3D cards or N64, and only 2 megs of RAM. So there are a lot of issues there around optimizing, but I think our approach has worked really well. We concentrate on getting the getting the core technologies working on all three platforms.

GR: Tell us more about the 3D engine.

CvdK: It's a fast action platform game so we're gonna be very unhappy unless the game's totally fluid. So we're looking at 25 to 30 frames per second, and upwards [of that] at least depending on what section of the game. We're pushing a lot of new technologies in there as well, and we've got a reasonably unique gouraud-shaded cartoon that does look spectacular. But it is a platform game, so our focus is to make the game pretty polygon-rich. We have a couple of surprises up our sleeves in terms of special effects and so on.

GR: Are there going to be lots of secrets and hidden areas?

CvdK: Oh massive amounts. Jim will play through in all sorts of ways, and there's gonna be timed sections, with related secrets. There will be absolutely twisted ways of getting into secret levels, and all sorts of hidden stuff.

GR: Is the humor going to be more adult, i.e. double entendres??

CvdK: It will fit into the genre of *The Simpsons*. There is definitely a dual-level for the plot-line. Kids will take it on one level, but there will be a

games with it. The PlayStation's new dual-shock controller is nice, but I just think that Nintendo got something right when they made that controller. But for us, all three games use exactly the same physics models, so at the end of the day it really just comes down to preference of controllers.

GR: What games are you currently playing?

CvdK: During the early design phase of the game we played the first two *Jim* games back-to-front and inside out. And when *Mario 64* came out, we just ripped that game apart. Consequently, every 3D platformer that has come out like *Gex 3D* [aka *Gex: enter the Gecko*], was also played. But to be honest, what we are playing now are PC strategy games. A lot. *Total Annihilation*, *Age of Empires*, but console wise, still playing *FF7*, coz I love it. Nintendo-wise, you can't beat a good multi-player game of *Diddy Kong*.

GR: So is the game shaping up well in your opinion?

CvdK: Oh Aye! In my humble opinion, well it's gonna be a stormer [laughs]! It doesn't look like any of the others, doesn't play like any of the others, and it's just got a humor all of it's own. We've got a good-sized team, a good publisher, but we don't, and nobody could ever pretend to have, the resources of Nintendo behind them. So for the level of people we've got here we've done an amazing job. It's gonna be a cracking product.

LESS WORRY!

We toast this invertebrate's arrival by interviewing Vis, Jim's developers...

By Bryn Williams

subtle layer hidden away for those that want to find it.

GR: Will the PC version be 3Dfx and 3D Accelerator card compatible?

CvdK: Absolutely.

GR: What is your opinion of the PC 3D games that exists, compared with the console versions?

CvdK: I think with the launch of Voodoo2 and PII and above, there's no way anything could compete with that sort of horse-power. Textures look unbelievable and games play amazingly, but then again, it's price versus performance.

GR: Do you think PC games are gaining ground against the consoles?

CvdK: I think you'll see lots more games like *Jim*, which are gonna be triple-skew releases; i.e. on all three formats at the same time. We've still got this big issue that, although it's got a lot better, it's still a pain in the arse to install and maintain games on a PC. Just plug a cartridge in and switch on and you can play. But in terms of gaining ground, yeah, I think it is because more and more people are using it as a format to play games on.

GR: Are the gameplay mechanics ideal on all three versions? Or do you have a favorite?

CvdK: Errmm, I think just from a purely ergonomic point of view, the N64 controller is still the best controller on the market, and I love playing

GR: How much influence and input have Shiny, Dave Perry and Doug TeNaple had?

CvdK: Effectively, the guys have had no direct input. The game has been moved to Scotland, and is being totally designed by VIS. We have, at various points in the project, gone back out to see Dave and Doug to let them see it and filtered their comments back in. It's incredibly useful to do that because you've got those two guys who have lived and breathed the product right from the start, and who really have a very strong affair with the character. We have listened and learned a lot from them, and I think they'll now come round, see the game, and really like it.

GR: So do you regard yourselves as lucky to be given such a famous character?

CvdK: There is a famous phrase, "you make your own luck", but, yeah, absolutely, we were lucky to be given this opportunity, but we worked damn hard to get ourselves in the position in the first place.

GR: Do you watch the EWJ cartoons?

CvdK: All of them. Completely. We got them all on video when we got the game. They are actually more *Simpsons*-like than you first give them credit for, because they are very kiddy-groovy type-stuff. But there is a whole load of other stuff going on underneath, which is very amusing.

[continued]

of
weird
shit! Which I
think is really cool!
GR: How many staff are there on the teams?

CvdK: It's quite difficult to break it down. Essentially, what we do is, do all the code development, and then split the team up. So there are six programmers on software, three on PSX, three on N64, and the PC has been developed to a certain stage, but we'll come back to that at the end and polish it up.

GR: Are you running into any major problems when converting the game to run on PlayStation and N64?

CvdK: Naw, you've got N64 which has its moments, as far as it's a 16 meg cart and that's it. But on the positive side, we've got instant memory access, which is great. But on the down side, we've only got 16 meg. We've got a lot of issues with the N64 version. We have had to re-work the music totally. The PlayStation obviously doesn't

GR: So will the game contain the trademark falling cows?

CvdK: The whole game is based on falling cows!

GR: Cool. Who is dealing with the music?

CvdK: The composer of the music for this game is an ex-member of a band called Danny Wilson (an 80s beat combo outfit). He's fantastic, so with our in-house head audio man, Stuart Clarke, who is doing all the Nintendo specific music, we got a good team.

GR: What other projects are you currently working on?

CvdK: Well, we have almost finished *HEDZ* which is for Hasbro, and was our first original product. And we are just about to start a new, as yet, unnamed project for 20th Century Fox.

GR: Did the first two *Jim* games sell well in Europe?

CvdK: Yeah, *Jim* did extremely well. *Jim 1* did better out here than *Jim 2*, but they both did really well.

GR: Are you writing a sequel to *EWj3D*?

CvdK: That's one to ask Mystic Meg, I think! [laughs] *[GR note: Mystic Meg is the United*

Kingdom's best known (but not necessarily best loved) psychic, appearing every week on the BBC's National Lottery Show]. Put it this way, if the game's the success we all hope it will be, I'm sure there will be more *Jim* games to follow.

At this point, Chris steps out and leaves the GR reporter facing a rather scary (and grisled)-looking Scottish man by the name of Kirk. With a very thick accent.

KE: Was Chris funny? I told him to be funny for the interview. No? Typical. Right then.

GR: Errr, yeah. [nervous laughter]. Kirk, what was the main concept behind the game?

KE: Basically, since Jim has achieved all this stardom, he's been offered a part in an all-action, blockbuster movie. During the filming of the title sequence of the movie, Jim is accidentally hit on the head by a stunt cow! This renders him unconscious and we travel inside his brain,

There's his childhood, which is a nuclear power-plant theme park. There's Jim's fantasy, which is to be a sheriff in a Wild West town, and then there's one more which I just can't remember.

GR: How many different texture-maps are there in the game?

KE: There's over 14 billion different texture-maps in the game. There were actually more, but we had to cut back to that. I have no idea. There's hundreds.

GR: Just to focus on PCs for moment, do you believe that PCs are for the super-rich only, or do you think they are becoming more accessible to the average console user?

KE: Err, PCs are pretty much for the super-rich. Let's be honest here, unless you want something made out of an old shoe-box and

and you take on the role of Jim's ego in order to sort out all the damaged goods in Jim's head. In that unsettling process, an evil force was released inside Jim's head. So there's a sort of evil, manipulative force at work in there.

GR: How many levels will there be in the finished game? And how long has each level taken to design and implement?

KE: There are six main themes, so like, six main areas of Jim's brain. And then there are about five or six levels within each theme. How long has it taken to implement each level? Well, 14 years per theme, so that's a total of 84 years so far which is obviously slightly longer than we anticipated.

GR: Nice. What style are the themes based on?

KE: Basically you're looking at the physical side of Jim's nature. His fears, which are all based on horror movies that he watched as a kid. His happiness, which for Jim is a kind of primeval, pizza-landscape, it's like the burger that time forgot!

elastic-bands, you're not gonna get much spec for your cash [much laughter].

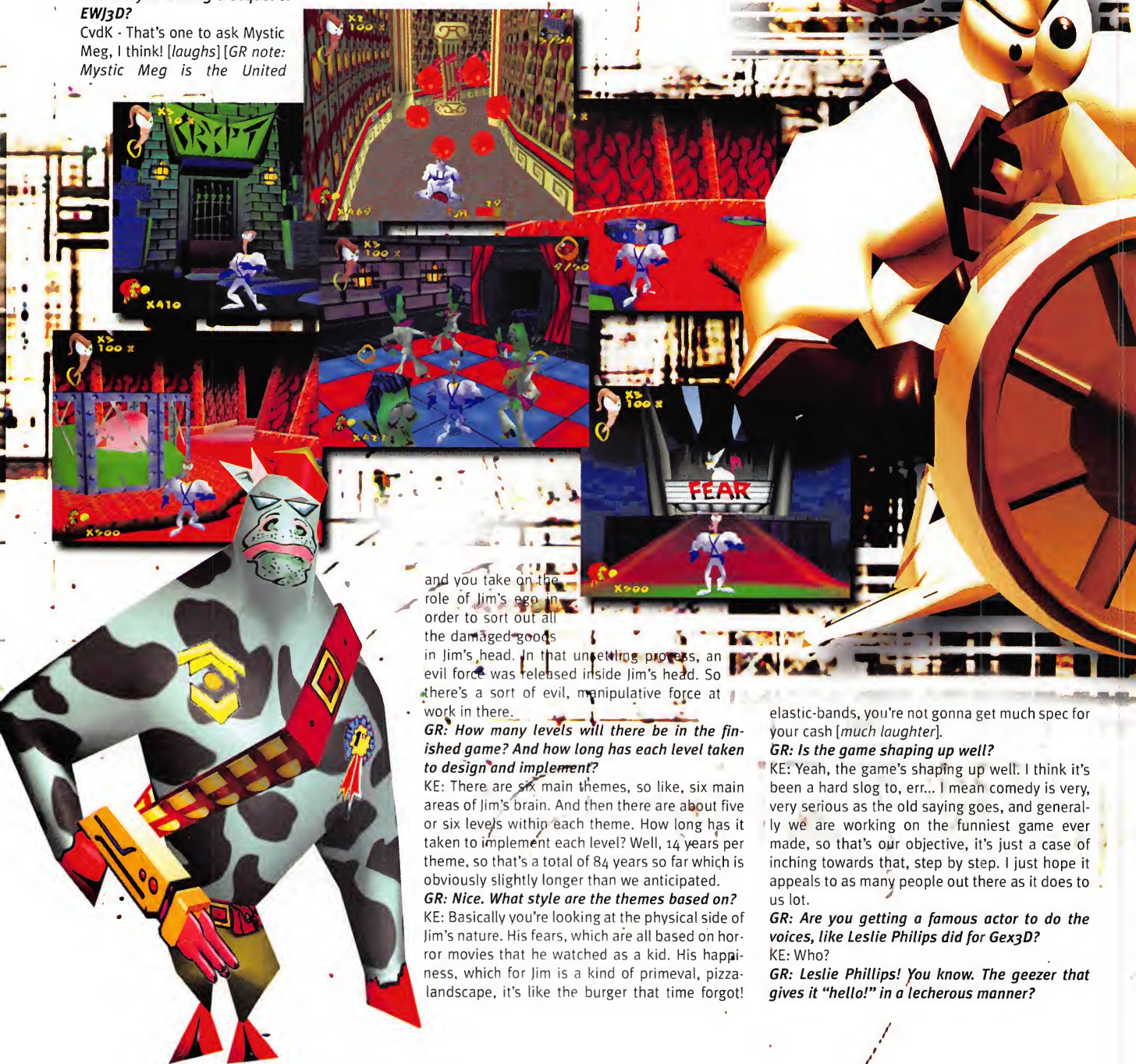
GR: Is the game shaping up well?

KE: Yeah, the game's shaping up well. I think it's been a hard slog to, err... I mean comedy is very, very serious as the old saying goes, and generally we are working on the funniest game ever made, so that's our objective, it's just a case of inching towards that, step by step. I just hope it appeals to as many people out there as it does to us lot.

GR: Are you getting a famous actor to do the voices, like Leslie Phillips did for *Gex3D*?

KE: Who?

GR: Leslie Phillips! You know. The geezer that gives it "hello!" in a lecherous manner?



KE: "Hello!" [emits an impression of Leslie Philips so startlingly unlike the man that the interviewer is initially confused]

GR: Eh? Oh yeah, that's him!

KE: He died last week.

GR: No, no, that was someone else.

KE: Was it? Oh, well I suppose it's better than doing the voice for Gex 3D and then dying.

GR: Errrm, yeah.

KW: We are currently talking to Dan Castanella, who does the voice of Jim in the cartoons, and also Homer Simpson. However, he is hideously expensive. But don't forget that Doug TenNapel did the original voices for the games, so maybe Doug might make a little appearance in there. Either one would be ideal.

GR: Will all the characters from the previous games and cartoons be included?

KE: Quite a number of them. You'll see the original characters like Evil the Cat,

KE: Yep. But it's not a direct competitor in the sense that it's a funny game. None of the other titles have got a shred of humor, coz lets face it, video games tend to be pretty bland.

GR: Are you incorporating analog support and rumble-pack feedback?

KE: Yep.

GR: Okay... Earthwork Jim set a benchmark in 16-bit gaming. How will you follow suite in 3D?

KE: What we have tried to do is make an interactive cartoon. Now that's a scary phrase because it implies that it's not really a game. I would expect people to look at this product and kind of get the same ideas you get when you watch the cartoon in terms of the humor and so on. Great gameplay and great gags.

GR: What are the goals for the levels? Are they object or platform based?

KE: The main goal in the game is to collect all Jim's brain cells that have been scattered around, thereby restoring Jim to his normal state. At the

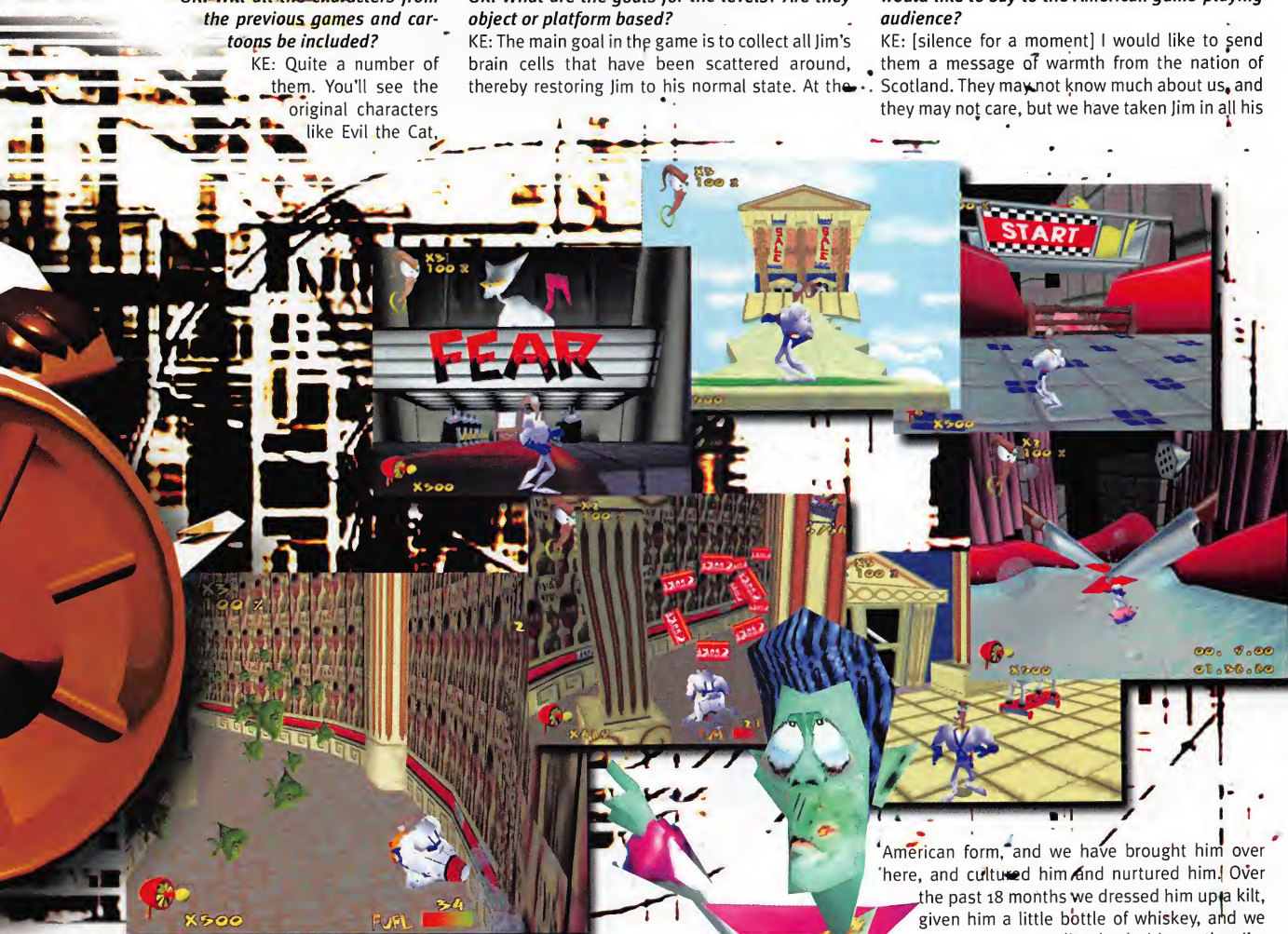
there. If you notice from the original game, when they had the whip, and then in the second game they replaced the whip with snot, mainly because I think they found that the whip wasn't actually that much fun. So everything else is in there.

GR: Initially, was Jim to be a 2D character in a 3D world? Like PaRappa perhaps?

KE: No. He's always been a 3D character in a 3D world. I mean, it was one of the decisions we made early on, y'know, we've looked back a few times and said, "oh, it would have been much easier to make Pandemonium", but I think people will like us for giving them the freedom to explore the worlds. So we made the right decision in the end.

GR: Well thanks Kirk. Now is there anything you would like to say to the American game-playing audience?

KE: [silence for a moment] I would like to send them a message of warmth from the nation of Scotland. They may not know much about us, and they may not care, but we have taken Jim in all his



Bob the Goldfish, the Henchrat is in there, Psychrow's in there, Professor Monkey-for-a-head's in there, and the cows, the chickens and the pigs. But we've also got some new characters like Mr. Roswell, who is an alien burger-franchise owner. We've got Rabbit, who's a giant scooter-riding rabbit that thinks he's Norman Bates. We've got a huge lobster-mobster with a chip on his shoulder. Oh yeah, and there's two kinda Greek slob-gods called Slobocles and Lysteria.

GR: Will the game be a direct competitor for the likes of Mario 64 and Gex?

KE: Yep. It's coming out on PlayStation and N64, so that makes it a competitor.

GR: Stupid question really.

end of each level, you have to defeat the boss. And the evil mastermind that I talked about, well they're in cahoots with the other bosses. And together they are trying to stop Jim from becoming conscious again.

GR: Will you be incorporating Jim's trademark whip, rocket-bike and gun?

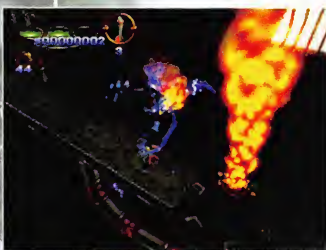
KE: Yeah, quite a lot of those will in there, along with some brand new stuff. Like the pump-pack which uses bean-fusion technology, but the whip's not in

American form, and we have brought him over here, and cultured him and nurtured him. Over the past 18 months we dressed him up in a kilt, given him a little bottle of whiskey, and we are sending back. I hope that Jim has learned something here, that he can take back to America with him. Oh yeah, Americans are all beautiful!

GR: Mr. Kirk Ewing and Mr. Chris van der Kuy, thank you very much indeed.

Special thanks to Richard Reavy and Stewart Waterson. VIS are an extremely exciting new company, and GR wishes them all the best in the future. We'll entertain ourselves with some worm wrestling in a future issue...





Gaming magazine covers as far back as early '97, Shiny's first PlayStation platform extravaganza, *The Wild 9*, has had more than its share of ups and downs. The company's tireless pursuit of absolute quality coupled with an industry riddled with creative fallout have driven *The Wild 9* into video game rehab more than once. But in the end, when the dust settles and the game hits store shelves, what really counts is that the consumer has been rewarded with a unique, and

more importantly, fun end product. Few companies will shine brighter than Shiny when this blessed event transpires; however, he who shines the brightest shines less often. Although all of Shiny's games have ranked as benchmark titles, they are few. *Earthworm Jim 1&2* for SNES and Genesis and *MDK* for PC will now be joined by three more titles sure to have a similar or greater impact: *The Wild 9* for PlayStation, a pyrotechnics-filled torture fest starring Wex Major and a quiver of inspired galactic characters; *Messiah* for the PC, PlayStation and hopefully Katana, a game that both technically and aesthetically breaks new ground (to say the least); and *Stunt Copter* for PlayStation, an instantly addicting flight sim that perfectly duplicates the physics of flight. This will bring the count up to a respectable nine games. My wish (post this wave of Shiny games): An in house developed 64-bit EWJ sequel. Hey, you never know...



Walk on the wild 9 side...
Shiny chronicles plus a look at their new platformer
By Dave Halverson



THE WILD 9

To assimilate *The Wild 9* to similar wares, imagine if George Lucas co-wrote *Star Wars* with Lewis Carroll and then co-directed it with Tex Avery. The result would be a non-stop thrill ride bursting with action and adventure and brimming with trademark Shiny humor.

You play as Wex Major, a teenager lost in another galaxy where he befriends and ultimately leads a motley band (thought I was gonna say 'crew', didn't ya?) of eight alien teenage orphans (thus the moniker, *The Wild 9*). Wex then reluctantly discovers that he may be the Great Champion who can operate the magical Rig and Glove weapon and liberate the billions of inhabitants of the Andromeda Galaxy. So together, *The Wild 9* embarks upon a David vs. Goliath battle against Karn, a 376 year-old enormous face who has the power of a god, yet the temperament of a toddler. Karn has set his sights on harnessing the ultimate power of the Glove and Rig, as well as being the only entity capable of using Wex Major's





Within this strange universe, evil black sheep walk upright and wield chainsaws, a psychotic with 176 separate personalities are the good guys, a heroine can draw her power from a magical tartan superhero outfit, and a normal teenage boy can be the savior of an entire galaxy. Wild!

Although obviously visually spectacular, at the core of *The Wild 9* is the torture weapon which Wex so aptly wields. Say you come up against a hardy emanation of fire in your path. In any other platformer, it would likely turn on and off in carefully timed intervals, allowing you just

enough time to slip through unscathed. In *The Wild 9* however, the stream would be constant. A way across it would be to capture an enemy in your beam and fry him in the flames. As he cooks - screaming bloody murder of course - the fire dies down, allowing you to cross. Some enemies however, don't wither so easily and will actually put up a fight, lifting and hurling Wex through space while wailing with agony as the torture weapons suck their life force dry.

The Wild 9 has that distinct Shiny feel as well, much the way NCL or Square games do. The animation, level design and Tommy T. tuneage are all hallmark Shiny. From gamedom, Wex and company will likely make their way to the growing action figure market and perhaps even Saturday mornings as *Earthworm Jim* did in such high fashion. One would certainly hope so because judging by the accompanying art, this galactic ensemble has a lot more to give. We'll have more on *The Wild 9* very soon as the game now has an official street date of September 29. \$



messiah

By Dave Rees

the last temptation of christ in silicon form?

Control an angel through a future ridden with prostitution and crime...

Shiny's upcoming monolith of gaming pushes the envelope of disputation!

I can see it now. Senator Joe Lieberman, followed by an enraged parade of MAVIA (Mothers Against Violence in America) members, makes his way to the front door of Shiny's stylish Laguna Beach studio. Soon enough, a militant band of religious right activists enters the scene. Picket signs reading "Messiah is Christ!" and "Angels Don't Kill!" are held high, furious shouts of discontent fill the air and, peering down from a heavenward window, Dave Perry looks on with a kind smile and thinks to himself, "Thank you for the exposure, you've just doubled Messiah's sales projections."

Sure, Shiny Entertainment's Messiah will be considered blasphemous by some, but perhaps we should first focus our attentions away from preaching about the controversy it presents and take a hard look at the game itself. After all, it is just a game.

Although what angels actually look like is still an unsolved mystery, throughout history, the most common depiction has been that of a majestic winged being showered in white light and crowned with a luminous halo. But Messiah's protagonist, simply named Bob, is curiously modeled after a cuddly little cherub: a fluffy, rosy-cheeked piglet-like infant with disproportionately small wings. But don't let his innocent appearance fool you; God has given Bob strict orders to possess the not-so-meek inhabitants of the Earth and use their weapons and abilities to kill the non-believers without kindness. That notion

alone would cause even a slightly religious parent to wince, but it gets even worse. The people that Bob must possess are not exactly saints, but exceedingly hairy well-hung gigolos, enormously bosomed female prostitutes, vengeful cops, and indecently dressed criminals with massive guns. Not necessarily desirable, but Bob has no other option in this kill-or-be-killed world.

Considering modern advancements in technology and the long list of soon-to-be-released 3D adventures, it is hard to imagine that anything slated for release before Christmas will improve much upon current standards. But Messiah's contemporary engine features some truly original routines that are so universally valued, Shiny sought to patent them. In particular, the game employs Real Time Tessellation and Deformation (RT-DAT). Tessellation is a polygon count regulating method that is already being utilized by many 3D titles, but Messiah takes it one step further by performing the algorithms in real-time. Based on your distance from an object, the polygon count is continually adjusted - anywhere from 80 to 8000 - and thus the engine is able to run at top efficiency at all times. Deformation is a character modeling system that emulates real human skeletal and muscle systems wrapped tightly within a skin texture. Coupling these





methodologies, Shiny have pioneered a 3D engine that can animate models more fluently and efficiently than any other PC based game before it, while maintaining an impressive frame-rate.

As you may have gathered, Shiny's *Messiah* is destined to be a polemic, but we must make sure that the game's sacrilegious subject matter does not overshadow the true reasons for its potential. There is a mature, fictional theme here that will likely leave an indelible mark upon many of us. There is impressive 3D technology that makes significant advancements over our current standards. And, as we all know, there is an utterly talented team of developers, writers, graphic artists, musicians and producers working mad hours to meet our ever-increasing demands. The resulting effort will likely be a revolutionary step forward in technology, and more than any other game before it, will surely deserve its ESRB Mature rating.

Messiah might bring about dissension from a number parents and senators, but in light of the prevocational success of Martin Scorsese's 1988 adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis's controversial novel *The Last Temptation of Christ*, perhaps the angry masses will find it wise to keep their mouths shut and let us enjoy this game in peace when it is released this Christmas. ☹

Possess thine enemy and kill with malice!

"Messiah might bring about dissension from a number of parents and senators..."

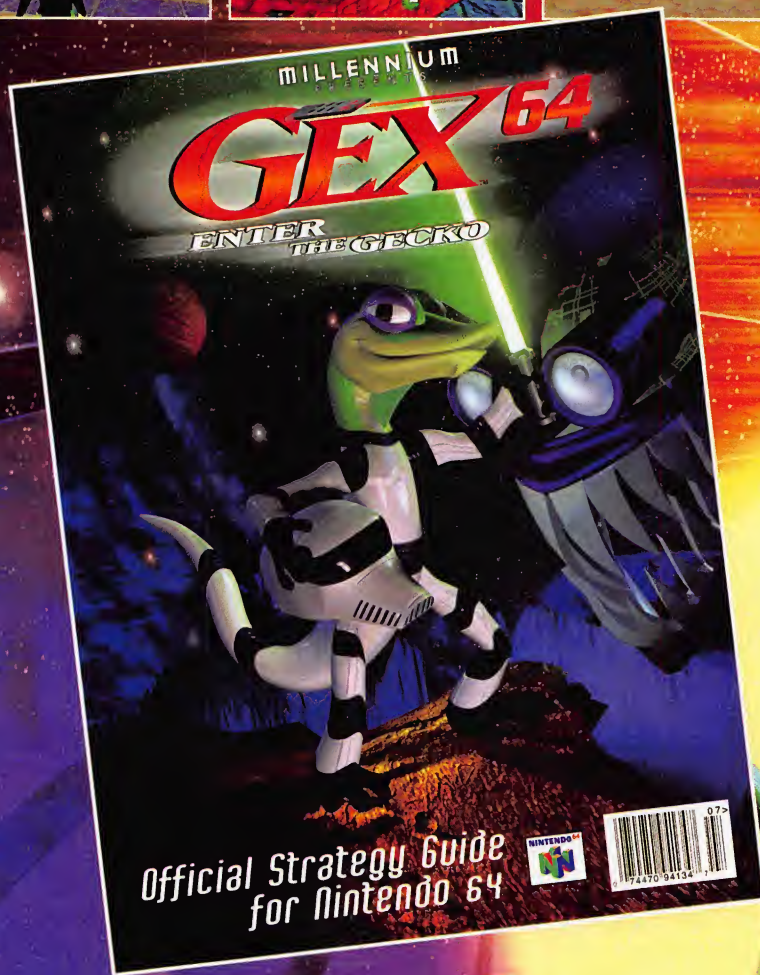
In an effort to build on *Messiah*'s compelling aura, Shiny have snatched up the rights to use several highly-original tunes composed by the progressive rock group, Fear Factory. Apparently the tunes have been re-mixed somewhat, but much to the band's approval, the original flavor remains intact. From the anthems we have already heard, the game's soundtrack is shaping up to be unlike any other before it.



With an engine powered by RT-DAT technology, *Messiah*'s characters are inherently lifelike. Even so, Shiny went to great extremes by employing motion capture technology for every character in the game. However, the main character, Bob, posed a problem. Labor laws prohibited Shiny from wiring up an infant for motion capture purposes. The solution? Shiny employed a dwarf by the name of Clay Rivers and apparently the session went extremely well. Well, we certainly can't wait to see the little guy in action.



Who's the Lizard with all the action?



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REVIEWS

The Nintendo 64 took us all by surprise this month when no less than five different games arrived for review, including a rather close conversion of Midway's cash cow, *Mortal Kombat 4*. Last month's cover game, *Forsaken*, receives due praise (for the unreal display of visuals constantly shocking anyone not used to seeing light-sourced and 3D accelerated graphics of this intensity) and some finger wagging (due in part to the lack of imagination in the opponents' appearances and some very strange level design). The PlayStation sneaks in there with the trippy and headache-inducing *N20*, but the real star of the show is ASC's *Sanitarium*, a ghastly and shocking journey into insanity and the four corners of mad Max's mind. For further information on our grading system, read on...



RATING SYSTEM

A+
A
A-
B+
B
B-
C+
C
C-
D+
D
D-
E
F

[A+ to A] Games in this bracket are the indubitable cream of the crop. They feature the very best in visual presentation, excellence in both initial and long term playability. The very best video game of its type, or an extremely close approximation thereof. *Example: Final Fantasy VII*

[A- to B] Games in this bracket are excellent, solid and highly playable pieces of software, although they lack minor polish to become truly outstanding. Slight graphical glitching coupled with a marginally disappointing ending may mar an otherwise exalted release. *Example: Tenchu*

[B- to C] Games in this bracket may have some great elements to them, but these are let down by one or two quite major problems, such as a limited movement, irritating sound or speech and a lack of foresight in the level design. Passable entertainment; nothing more. *Example: Pitfall 3D*

[C- to D] Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the design stage and/or hurried. *Example: MK Mythologies: Sub Zero*

[D- to F] Very rarely will we come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. *Example: Fantastic Four*

THIS MONTH

<i>Alien Earth</i>	B-
<i>All-Star Baseball '99</i>	B
<i>Army Men</i>	B
<i>Azure Dreams</i>	C+
<i>Blo Freaks</i>	C-
<i>Chopper Attack</i>	C-
<i>Forsaken</i>	B-
<i>Grandstream Saga</i>	B-
<i>Hot Shots Golf</i>	A-
<i>Jeremy McGrath</i>	D
<i>Might & Magic VI</i>	C-
<i>Mike Piazza Strikezone</i>	C-
<i>Mortal Kombat 4</i>	C
<i>N20</i>	B
<i>Quest 64</i>	B+
<i>Redline Racer</i>	B
<i>Sanitarium</i>	A
<i>Star Wars Rebellion</i>	C+
<i>VR Baseball '99</i>	B
<i>Wetrix</i>	B
<i>World Cup '98</i>	B

1. Games marked in **RED** are recommended for your gaming collection.

2. Games marked in **ORANGE** should be avoided completely.

Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is an instantly recommended purchase. Game scoring a D or below should be forgotten about immediately. Games scoring a low D or F should be ritually burnt and/or buried in a landfill.

The world of *Alien Earth* is such a visual wonder, the faults of the game are nearly stifled. After being ravished by an alien race in the late 21st Century, Earth is left in a crumbling, leaking, pestilent state of ruin. A solemn atmosphere drifts through the city streets and countryside, painting a story that words could never evoke.

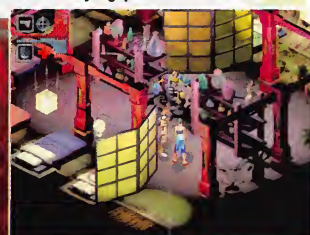
Wonderful in its detail and design, the post-apocalyptic artwork unfortunately serves as a necessary lifeline to a back-story drowning in the depths of the compelling visual command. However, the story development does work, a far cry from being a distracter. In search of freedom from the alien race still inhabiting the planet, the protagonist will meet colorful individuals brought to life by competent voice acting, and soon he will join a resistance movement plotting the destruction of the plundering Raksha. Throughout this journey, creative and deeply thoughtful puzzles must be uncovered while avoiding this alien race. Weapons can be found and purchased, junk collected for trade and valuable tinker-

alien earth

By Brady Fiechter

A crumbling, pestilent Earth is in need of help

and you're the man to breathe life back into the dying planet...



ing, and the power of the mind can be harnessed as an incredible instrument for destruction.

For all of *Alien Earth's* stupendous production values, a number of piercing faults do indeed begin to strike at the surface, and when their presence is felt, the game discouragingly begins to fall apart. The minor things such as a stiff character who belies the richness of his surrounding and important objects that lack contrast with the background

insidiously creep into the enjoyment of the game. And combat with enemies is extremely tedious and often frustrating due to the sluggish pace of your character, and a boring point-and-click targeting system only compounds the problems.

If the action sequences had been removed entirely from *Alien Earth*, the adventure aspects alone would have been adequate support for an affecting experience. It's a shame how imagination and mystery alone can no longer drive a game.



Join the resistance movement...

- AN APOCALYPTIC ATMOSPHERE INTENSELY CONVINCING.
- LUSH SOUND EFFECTS FLESH OUT THE DUSKY WORLD.

- PREPARE TO SCREAM FOR YOUR CHARACTER TO RUN.
- MORE MUSIC WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

IF YOU APPRECIATE THE DETAIL AFFORDED BY 2D IMAGERY AND CAN TOLERATE YOUR CHARACTER'S SNAIL PACING - THE ROOT OF NEARLY EVERY PROBLEM - THIS CANNOT BE MISSED.

B.

azure dreams

By Mike Hobbs

KCET's *Azure Dreams* marks the first 32-bit title of its kind to officially make it to the U.S. Resembling a cross between role-playing and turn-based strategy, many may be new to the genre, though there have been Japanese precedents such as Chun Soft's *Mysterious Dungeon* series.

In *Azure*, the main play area is a multi-level dungeon with a layout and monster/item placement that changes each time you enter. Enemies move only when you do, and each action and step you take counting as a turn. If you should happen to



In the remote town of Monsbaiya, there resides the famed Monster Tower, a beacon for Treasure Hunters from all across the land. Find and hatch the eggs hidden within.



die (or become exhausted, as the game puts it), you are sent back to town to start the quest anew. The game's hook are the 'Monster Eggs' hidden within the Tower which can be hatched and the resulting Monsters turned into allies. They can be directed in myriad ways and can even be fused together to form unique combinations of abilities.

The game's random item placement unfortunately means that you will be blessed at times and cursed at others. All manner of powerful weapons and beneficial items might be found right at the start of the quest. Or, you may find diddly-squat and be stuck out there waving a crappy copper sword around for six levels and then die because you're too damn weak. And you will definitely pinch a fit if you happen to croak way up into the Tower after playing for more than an hour, only to be sent crawling back to town completely-empty handed and at level one. It's a real bummer, man.

Azure's graphics are competent, if far from state-of-the-art. While the little rendered characters are fairly well animated, they suffer from ugly, big-pixel syndrome up close. Musically, the game's tunes are average as well, though bolstered by some appealing Arabian riffs.

Outside of the terrible emotional crash after each death and its lack of polish, *Azure* is an interesting and occasionally involving game. The ability to fuse your Monsters together and combine their capabilities adds a bit of entertaining depth. And when you do find good items and equipment, the pace moves along nicely. It just doesn't do that quite often enough. **B-**

Thrill at ever-changing dungeons!

You'll never grow tired of Azure's unique level layout...

You'll love this feature until it starts killing you. Then you'll wish you could predict where everything could be...

- IT'S FUN SCREWING WITH THE MONSTERS.
- THE GAME IS DIFFERENT EVERY TIME.

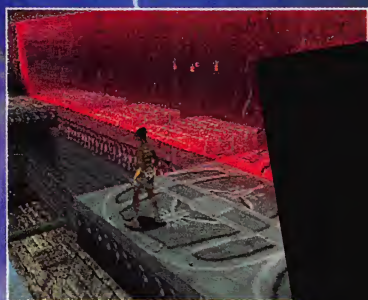
- STAY AWAY FROM LITTLE PUPPIES WHEN YOU DIE...
- ANNOYING SLOWDOWN ON COMPLEX DUNGEONS.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THE RANDOM NATURE OF THIS GAME ULTIMATELY MAKES IT TOO FRUSTRATING FOR A FULL ENDORSEMENT. IT IS, HOWEVER, A RARE AND UNIQUE GAME STYLE THAT SOME MAY ENJOY.

B-

It's Coming...



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bio freaks

By Mike Hobbs

Futuristic combat with mechanized deviants!

A collection of crazed characters entertains... but what of the gameplay? Read on...

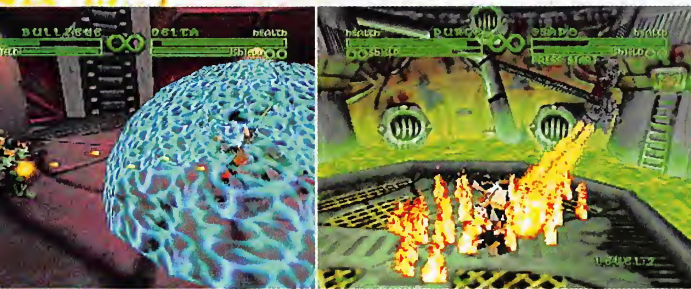
Whether wholly successful or not, it's always appreciated when a developer tries something new. Granted, there's nothing at all new about a one-on-one fighter, but Midway's attempt to change the rules a little with *Bio Freaks* has not fallen on blind eyes. However, like many forays into the unknown, it's not an entirely successful journey.

Taking place in an entropic future United States dubbed Neo-Amerika, *BF* serves up an exemplary cast of cybernetically enhanced combatants. Here, the game is strong with good looking, well modeled characters of interesting design. The same goes for the rather large arenas where you'll find some surrounded by lava, acid, or even big grinders to knock your opponent into.

It is in the gameplay that *Bio Freaks* starts to fall apart. To begin with, each character has a jumpjet, giving them the ability to fly all around the arena.

There are also one button projectile moves for every character, part of the instant gratification that market research seems to imply that Americans want. Now the problem is, these easily executed projectile attacks are completely at odds with the characters' ability to jet around all over the arena. This must've occurred to the developers as well, so what they've done is throw in an awful-looking shield which protects you from projectiles for a limited time. The shield effect turns your character into a glitching, non-textured polygonal mess that I thought was a symptom of our preview copies. Imagine my shock when this turned out to be the actual effect in the final version! It's seriously sub-par and out right laughable. Further negating the jetting around is a zoom function which flings you straight at the other player no matter where they there are on-screen in less than a second. So basically, any kind of innovation to be had from these huge, multi-platform arenas is completely circumvented by the shields and zooming.

There are other gimmicks as well, like dismemberment and Ultimate Victory moves which can kill in one hit, but these are merely good for a laugh and not worthy of a modern 3D fighter, whatever its intentions. I suppose that someday, somebody might make a really good fighter on N64. I just hope I'm around long enough to see it. Isn't that sad.



■ GOOD LOOKING CHARACTERS IMPROVE OVER PS VERSION
■ INCREDIBLY ANNOYING ONE PLAYER AI FRUSTRATES

■ STIFF CHARACTER MOVEMENT AND UNINSPIRED CONTROL
■ CONCEPTUALLY AND VISUALLY FLAWED SHIELD SYSTEM

REPUBLIC SAYS...

AN ATTEMPT AT SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAT JUST DOESN'T WORK, THOUGH SOME MAY FIND A BIT OF UNSOPHISTICATED PLEASURE IN THE TWO-PLAYER MODE.

C



CHOPPER ATTACK™



I like how the giant men with rocket launchers leap off the ground to grab onto the helicopter's tail, screaming as they dangle precariously before falling off or being smashed into the ground. I like watching these same hapless men and other armed foot soldiers scurrying helplessly away from cannon fire

before being rocketed to ridiculous heights as they flail in an amusingly drawn out fashion. I like the intense feeling of having a heat-seeking missile locked onto my helicopter while it draws ever so closer, winding, rising, falling, at times visible all the way to impact.

Chopper Attack, Midway's answer to the dearth of action titles available on Nintendo 64, has its moments, and you've just been introduced to all of them. For the first two or three levels, seeking out heavily-armed enemy ground and air units builds a decent level of entertainment, yet subsequent levels involve nearly identical modes of play. This does not bode well for a game that, from the beginning, never breaks free from the binds of mediocrity.

Even if the gameplay were better, *Chopper Attack* would need more of a reason to spark enthusiasm with its bland, simplistic, almost unacceptable lack of changing terrain which undermines the already banal action. To call *Chopper Attack* an action/combat game is more of a courtesy than a description. Each of the eight selectable helicopters lumber through the air as if they were hang-gliders, floating around at nearly stalled speeds, eliciting a sense of boredom where swift energy is a must in a game of this fashion.

Lifeless, monotonous explosions do nothing to heighten the action, and your artillery is fired off with such imprecision, targeting the flurry of ground and air units ultimately becomes a tedious and ultimately frustrating endeavor.

But the level of intolerance can only grow. After completing the missions which are nothing more than blowing up key ground and air targets, each new area is segued by an obnoxious polygonal general spouting off laughable taunts such as "you wanna party tonight?!". The poor guy's arms, seemingly twice the length they should be, only furthers the amusement of the scene, an inauspicious indication of what is to come... ✱

I enjoyed the first few levels; maybe you'll enjoy them all.



The concept behind *Chopper Attack* is immensely desirable, especially since the Nintendo 64 needs more of these games. I wanted to play simply to experience something different. Unfortunately, different does not mean good - boring graphics, boring level design, boring missions, equals boring game.

■ DESPITE ITS LETHARGIC PLAY, IT STILL CONTROLS WELL. EXCEPTIONALLY SLOW GAMEPLAY.

■ I THOUGHT FOG MEANS MORE DETAILED GRAPHICS... A WORD OF CAUTION: TURN THE SOUND OFF.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

Mired in visual sludge, *Chopper Attack*'s gameplay never has a chance to adequately reward the player - a shame considering the need for such a game.



By Brady Fiechter

chopper attack

About the only thing keeping you going is knowing there aren't many games out there like *Chopper Attack* on N64

mortal kombat 4

Alarmingly close to being soporific mere seconds into the game, *Mortal Kombat 4* snaps us back to life with the one element we all know is its base appeal: fatalities. Admittedly, watching heads explode like a watermelon in a vice and bodies coming apart with more blood than the volume of three men can be good fun, but after seeing the macabre displays of death more than once, the violence begins to become a lugubrious display.

Now that the ubiquitous gore of the *MK* series is starting to wear thin, our attention is focused on the finer aspects of the fighting engine. To say *MK 4* is a precision fighter is being a bit generous, as the combat is often left to desultory button combinations, but given the cumbersome Nintendo 64 controller, it's not always the game's fault we are forced into a reckless fighting style. Fights can become manic on the harder levels, and the often tediously cheap opponents don't go down easily.

If *MK 4* only looked better, the visuals could serve as a lifeline to soften the suffocating squeeze placed by the tiresome battles, catapulting the game out of the annals of the average fighter. Although technically respectable, the backgrounds are uninspiring, looking like rehased art from the past games in the series. The implementation of polygons does nothing to enhance the gameplay, and only sabotages the morose atmosphere by compromising art detail. And looking like a fre-

"Everything is here, including new characters, interactive environments, weapons, blood, combos, and a competent transplanting of the overall look and feel."

By Brady Fiechter



netic Charlie Chaplin film, the animations can get a bit goofy and exaggerated at times, especially during fatalities.

Fans of the *MK* series are going to appreciate this latest installment for its competent mirroring of its arcade counterpart. Everything is here, including new characters, environments, weapons, blood, combos, and a competent transplanting of the overall look and feel.

One of the most twisted and addicting fatalities in the game is performed by one of the new characters, Quan Chi, where he rips the loser's leg off and proceeds to maliciously beat him as he struggles on the ground. This is what *MK* is all about, a marginally entertaining montage of gruesome mutilations. But how long will these fatalities continue to adequately underpin (yet enhance) the languishing, run-of-the-mill fighting engine? ✱



■ RESPECTABLY MIRRORS THE ARCADE, PLEASING FANS.
■ SUPERSEDES THE PLAYSTATION IN EVERY WAY

■ TIGHT CONTROL, HURT BY THE CUMBERSOME N64 PAD.
■ DEJA-VU ALL OVER AGAIN.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

IF THE NEXT *MK* DOESN'T EMPLOY A TRUE 3D ENGINE, INTRODUCE CREATIVE FIGHTERS AND SET THE COMBAT AGAINST COMPELLING BACKDROPS, CONSIDER THE SERIES DEAD.

C



By Mike Griffin



n2o

An intense visual blast!

Mask up! You're the techno insect exterminator!

N2o is viciously beautiful. There's no other way to describe it. Gremlin has managed to combine the frenetic, rhythmic blasting of *Tempest 2000* with the structured, straightforward speed of *Nanotek Warrior*. Add unprecedented psychedelic visuals to the mix, realized through amazing lighting and warping effects, and a frame rate which hovers between 45 and 60 fps constantly, and you have one of the most graphically stunning first-person shooters ever. *N2o* is also incredibly challenging, which is part of its appeal. Similar in concept to *Tempest 2K*, *N2o* throws you into a shooter scenario without emphasis on story or goals. You're simply there, streaking through seemingly endless tunnels, destroying everything in your path for the greater glory of an impending adrenaline rush. There's method to this madness as well. Each part of a level will loop until you've eliminated every possible insect. Each insect that is missed during one such loop returns the next time stronger, faster, and sometimes better equipped (i.e., it might gain the ability to fire back).

Naturally in this advanced state the insects are also worth more points, so gameplay becomes a careful balance between survival and calculated scoring. Along the way you'll find an assortment of secondary weapons as well as shield power-ups hidden with-



in mushrooms. All items can be saved and activated on command, when it counts the most. If *N2o* still doesn't sound like it's following your typical shooter formula, there's also boss encounters at the end of every level, as well as bonus stages where you can rack-up free men with massive scores. It also offers a cool two-player mode where you can split the screen or share the same tunnel! Doubling your craft's firepower is most definitely recommended...

So it all sounds simple enough, right? Not so. You'll be shocked at first by the psychotropic barrage, before you even realize there's a straight-laced shooter beneath the spectacle of color and sound. It's this presentation that makes *N2o* so unique. Cool fonts and designs are splashed across every screen, while backgrounds zoom in and out through tides of gorgeous color cycling. An intense breakbeat soundtrack, fueled by *The Crystal Method*, couldn't be any better suited to this type of action, and if you're the lucky owner of a Pro Logic 5-speaker system you'll be hypnotized by *N2o*'s thrilling soundscape of ambient effects.

I was initially won over by *N2o*'s glorious presentation, but have come to accept it as a solid, challenging shooter. It could have benefited from a greater variety of enemy designs and patterns, but this is a minor gripe. As it stands, *N2o* is far too stimulating to miss out on. It's one of those hybrid shooters (like *Nanotek*) that belongs in your game collection.



Mesmerizing psychedelic effects

Accompanied by a pounding soundtrack from The Crystal Method

■ AMAZING FRAME RATES AND STUNNING EFFECTS
■ FANTASTIC CHALLENGE AND LENGTH

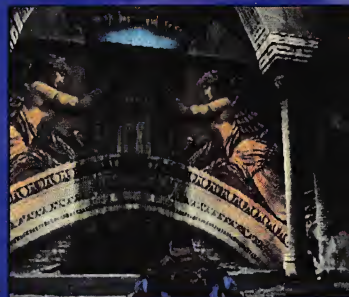
■ THE PERFECT SOUNDTRACK FOR THIS TYPE OF GAME
■ SLIGHTLY REPETITIOUS ENEMIES & ATTACK PATTERNS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

WELL WORTH PLAYING, IF ONLY TO ASSAULT YOUR SENSES. STRAP YOURSELF IN, LOCK YOUR EYES TO THE SCREEN, AND RAISE THE VOLUME TO INSANE LEVELS...

B

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An RPG is born...

Peaceful Celtland Island is watched over by Spirit Tamers; magical guardians at one with nature's elements. Their secrets are inscribed within Eletale's Book. You are young apprentice-magician Brian, Son of Lord Bartholomy (a powerful Spirit Tamer himself). Lord Bartholomy set out some time ago to

recover the sacred Eletale Book after it was stolen by the Master Wizard. If the secret scriptures contained within the book (which can only be viewed by those worthy of becoming a Spirit Tamer) are abused, they could cast the world into eternal darkness. Brian embarks on his adventure to find his father but soon realizes that he possesses the power to reclaim the Eletale Book as well. Of course, the evil wizard is casting spells throughout the land, creating hideous beasts and causing havoc among the citizens of Celtland, so many obstacles lie in Brian's path.

Visually stunning...

Quest 64 is without a doubt one of the most visually astonishing console games ever. From the mind-bogglingly vast horizons to the incredibly detailed towns and villages, it is saturated with jaw dropping vistas made all the more vivid by the convincing real-time environmental factors. From the twin windmills of Normoon to the vast townscape of Limland, there are times when *Quest's* graphics simply take your breath away. Imagineer have tapped into the Nintendo cart muncher something fierce and pulled out some truly remarkable graphic splendor.



quest 64

By Dave Halverson

THQ gets Quest released in the US before Japan! And... before Zelda.





But what about character development?

Ever play an RPG with mediocre graphics but the story was so intriguing that you stuck with it anyway? Well, place the shoe on the other foot. Quest is Role-Playing-by-the-numbers with graphic pay-offs so monumental, you'll ignore the shallow character development and... (very happily) stick with it anyway.

You'll be fighting too much to care...

At its core, *Quest* revolves around a unique magic system. You can cast upwards of 50 spells by controlling the four spirits of nature: Earth, Water, Air and Fire. Jewels must be collected that correspond with each, and as you collect them your spell power increases. You obtain them by winning battles and searching for earth-born spirits. They are few and far between however, and finding them often means drudging through battles you don't want to fight as you explore Celtland's many hills and valleys. Take my word for it though, and fight every one. Running (or escaping) will only result in the guardian at scenario's end pummeling you to shreds, you're too weak and inexperienced to endure. So, just stock up on healing herbs then, right? Well, no, because... there are no vendors. That's right, an RPG without shops! There are Inns and Bars where

you may occasionally score a loaf of bread, but otherwise you'll be relying on your magic, agility, and strength. You can increase these natural abilities, (by fighting) but you can only use what you can find (bread, trinkets, and potions) for healing, without consuming MP. *Quest 64* demands that you level up before each climactic scenario. This means running around and fighting... a lot. They want you to master the magic, and like it or not, you will. Luckily, the battles are actually quite cool. You have limited scrambling ability within an octagon around Brian, so you can dodge by running under long range attacks, around ground attacks, etc.. Homing attacks will always find you, although the further away you are, the less likely they are to connect. Spells must be used wisely too. Close attacks with the staff do the most damage but leave you directly in the line of fire, while hanging back using weak/long range magic drains MP. As if they knew you'd be getting pummeled repeatedly, Imagineer have cleverly balanced the way you

maintain health status. Running builds your MP bar which can be used to heal you in small increments... bringing it back down. You get the point. In any other RPG this would have driven me completely crazy but in *Quest's* case the visual pay-offs, as you progress, are so spectacular that I just learned to live with it, and eventually, embrace it. Graphically, besides the astonishing environments, Brian himself is animated skillfully though I can only say the same for about half of the enemies. The magic/spell effects are quite inspired, especially as they grow in size, with colorful pyrotechnics in the trademark Nintendo style. It is the diversity and awesomeness (is that a word?) of the environments though that take center stage in this game. In that 64-bit twilight zone that is the memory allocated for music, it is of high SNES quality... It doesn't suck, but I won't be searching out the soundtrack. ⚡

Just go buy it already...

Regardless, it ain't like you've got another RPG to buy to now, is it? THQ in their new found wisdom actually got *Quest 64* released in the US before its native Japan! And... before *Zelda*. KA-CHING!! Huge kudos to Imagineer

and THQ for doing so and reversing a trend etched in granite.

In the end, all I can say is that *Quest 64* is an acquired taste, but by the time it gets to your belly, it's sweet, like candy.



■ THE FIRST 64 RPG IS AN EPIC "QUEST"
■ STUNNING GRAPHICS REWARD THE WEARY THROUGHOUT

■ UNIQUE BATTLE ENGINE AND MAGIC SYSTEM
■ LEVEL UP 'TIL THE COWS COME HOME © LEAVE AGAIN

REPUBLIC SAYS...

COMPLETING QUEST IS AN INVESTMENT IN TIME AND PATIENCE. BUT THERE'S ENOUGH SPLENDOR TO MAKE IT WELL WORTH THE EFFORT. DON'T MISS IT!

B+

**By David Hodgson**

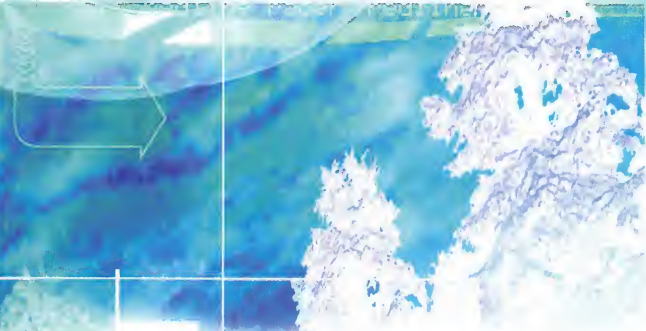
We all know that struggling into tight-fitting leather and bolting down exceedingly narrow roadways is not only uncomfortable and sweaty (thanks to new helmet laws) but also extremely dangerous... due to the fact that speed coupled with the mushability of the human form and the hardness of gravel roads makes hitting the ground a rather messy experience. Previous forays into this racing sub-genre have yielded either arcade-style racing (such as *Manx T.T.*, which, despite graphical prowess was a more strenuous and tilting version of *Sega Rally*), or pure bludgeoning mayhem (as in the case of the *Road Rash* series, where winning wasn't everything; wrapping chains around your biker foe's head and throttling him was). With this in mind, Ubisoft (via Criterion Studios) have attempted to merge the two



redline racer

Merging incredible visuals with immense fun!

Extreme biking with frighteningly fast speeds and eight player multi-play!



sub-divisions to create an all-new bike racing genre; the race-very-fast-and-still-crash-spectacularly motorbike game. To this end, they have succeeded rather well.

Arcade-style bike racing has never been as exquisitely presented on the PC format as with *Redline Racer*. Providing your personal computer is up to the task (a Pentium 166 with 32MB with 3DFX, or a Pentium 200 with Direct 3D supported graphics accelerated cards are recommended; anything less and you'll be chugging), you'll expect a constant 30 fps refresh rate, with gorgeously textured hillsides, beaches and desert tracks zipping by at alarmingly fast rates. Take the initial course for example, a tight and winding romp through the English countryside, complete with crooks and turns, authentic signposts and fifteen other bikers all vying for pole position. At the beginning of every race, though, you'll be at the back of the pack, making the basic premise of the game to scoot past the CPU drones, slowing down only for hairpin curves, and claim the victory. Completing the initial tracks allows more powerful (and finally rather wacky) bikes to be employed, as well as opening more expansive courses, until ten tracks and 14 modes of transportation (let's just say not all of them are two-wheeled) are yours. These hidden courses are all the more twisty, featuring numerous nasty corners, and all adding to the overall fraughtness of the experience. These tracks are nothing shock-



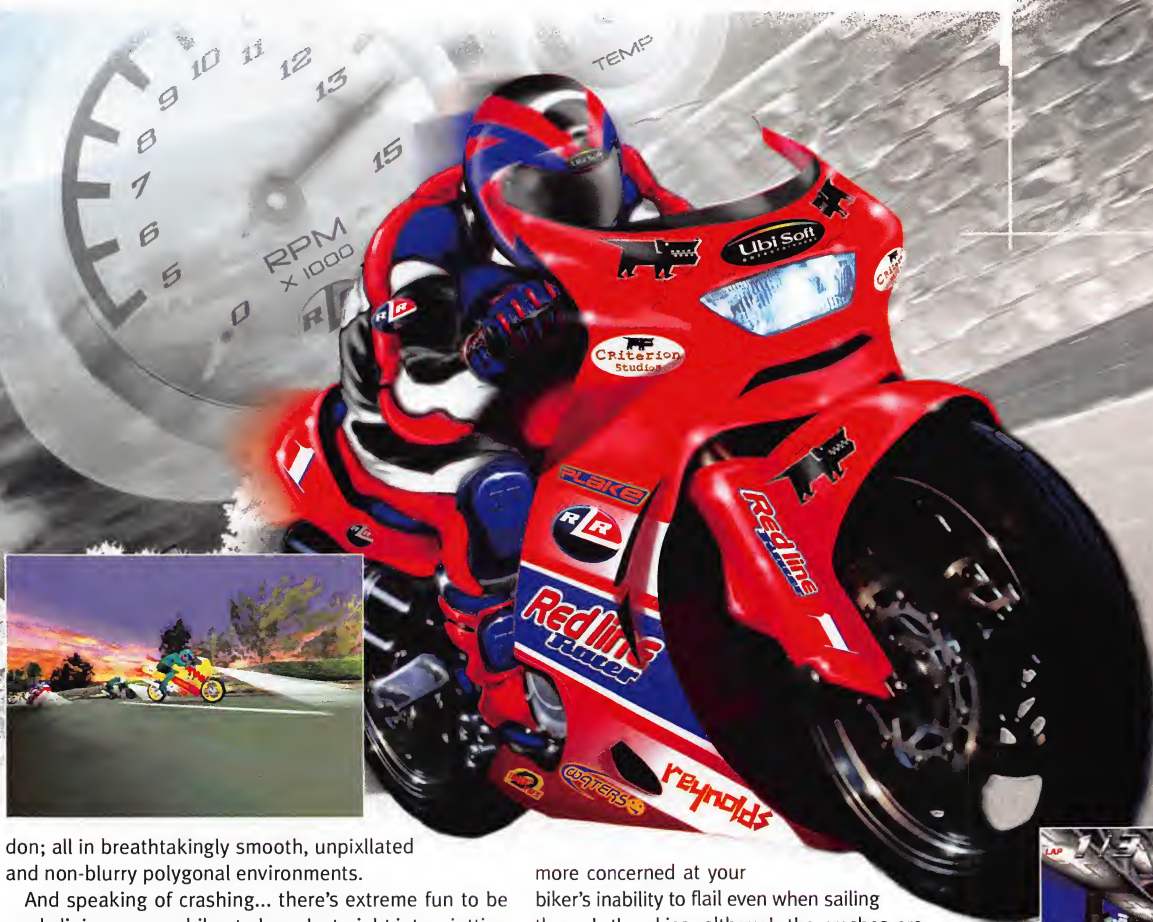
"...you'll expect a constant 30 fps refresh rate, with gorgeously textured hillsides, beaches and desert tracks zipping by at alarmingly fast rates..."



ingly spectacular, but good enough to warrant a couple of fun-filled days of racing.

The controls of this 'experience' take about five minutes to become intuitive, and only a little more time to master. Providing you've bought yourself one of the many joypads available, the whole control issue becomes a lot more responsive, but even those still on keyboard should find bike handling more than passable. Once the braking, 'turbo boost' (*Street Hawk* style), viewpoints (all the usual you'd expect in a racer)

and the strange 'signal' (where your biker shakes his fist passionately at anything to his right side) have been utilizing into your driving repertoire, you'll begin your empasioned bike run. There's the run-of-the-mill announcer, patented techno/guitar musak thumping in the background, but the racing environments more than make up for this lack of flair (with the exception of the nasty four panel polygon trees). These graphical advancements mean your biker foes lean into the curves, weave expertly around competitors, and crash into one another with gay abandon.



The real excitement from Redline Racer (once the single player game has been conquered) is the multi-player event. Incorporating up to eight players, each bike can be selected and then haphazardly thrown about any of the tracks. You haven't witnessed the true meaning of the word 'speed' without obtaining the secret hoverbike and zipping about twisty courses... Endor style!

don; all in breathtakingly smooth, unpixellated and non-blurry polygonal environments.

And speaking of crashing... there's extreme fun to be made lining up your biker to launch straight into a jutting structure; the ensuing altercation between fast bike and concrete wall ensures your rider tumbles into the scenery with his bike spinning closely behind. So dramatic are these crashes that sometimes the bike and rider somersault into a strange unpolygonated land where only the background scenery remains... a result of the track still being under construction, and the only time where you'll actively grimace at any pop-up. You'll be

more concerned at your biker's inability to flail even when sailing through the skies; although the crashes are excellent, the rider stays set in one animation, looking more like a shop dummy slamming into the dirt than a steel wheeler skidding. This, coupled with a low polygon count on the riders and bikes detracts from the overall appeal, but the speed, realism of the game in motion, number of courses and assortment of secret bikes should entertain any driving gamer craving arcade-style thrills. Good fun; great in multi-player. ☺



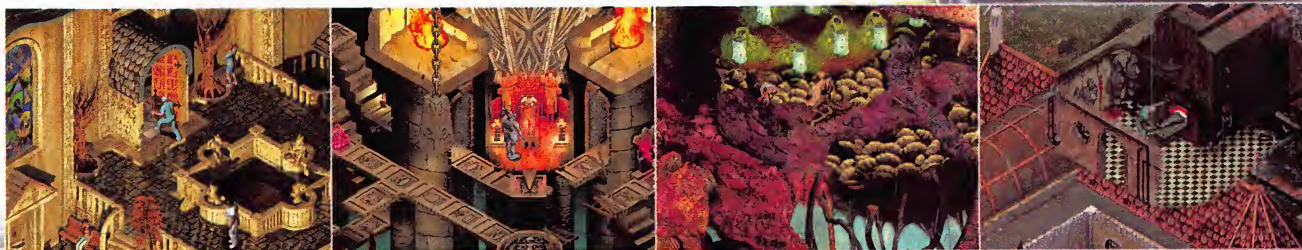
■ GRAPHICALLY IMPRESSIVE COURSES AND VERY FAST
■ EXCEPTIONAL MULTI-PLAYER FUN AND COOL BIKES

■ TWO DAYS WORTH OF ONE PLAYER GAMEPLAY.
■ MORE POLYGONS & ANIMATION ON THE BIKERS NEEDED

REPUBLIC SAYS...

A SOLID AND ENTERTAINING RIDE, INCORPORATING WILDLY DIFFERENT COURSE DESIGN WITH MARVELOUS MULTI-PLAY. THIS COMPENSATES FOR THE SHORT ONE-PLAYER GAME.

B



Explore the four corners of your mind... for the first time

Wandering between two worlds

At a glance, DreamForge Interactive's *Sanitarium* appears to be another 'me too' in the dated genre of point-and-click graphic adventures, but just a peek into its masterfully constructed plot and unique artistic style proves just how deceptive a glance can be. From the outset, the game soaks your thinking cap with a continuous torrent of bewilderment and intrigue, and up until the very end, you'll be questioning what is real and what is not. Without debate, this game is a strong argument for substance over style.

Even though *Sanitarium* does not push any envelopes of technology, it does maintain a high degree of creativity within its boundaries. With unrestrained imagery and seamless animation, the game boasts a rich appeal that draws from several styles, and the result is

By Dave Rees

sanitarium

Redefining the point-and-click adventure, with more than a little horror to boot!

An elusive plot that defies logic beckons you... Can you unturl the mystery behind Sanitarium?



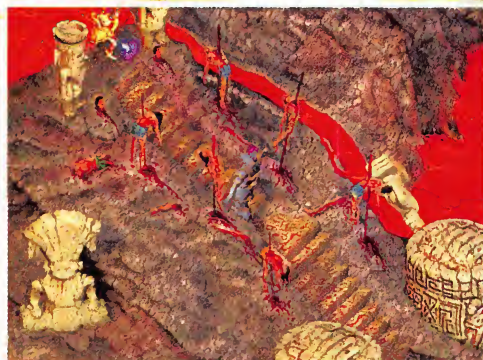
A myriad of fiendish puzzles to solve...

...coupled with a mammoth trek into darkness, despair and terror

truly original. Whether viewing a vivid render of a horribly disfigured child or a heart-sinking sepia-toned depiction of your sister's childhood death, the overall visual impact is remarkably eerie and atmospheric.

Sanitarium also relies heavily on voice acting to enliven its appeal and DreamForge went to great extremes to avoid the harsh criticisms that similar titles had suffered in the past. Most of the characters have plenty to say, and each - including a bratty child (with two mouths!), frothing botanical monstrosity, shivering old man, hissing insect, or even a deranged Elvis impersonator - has a convincing voice that reveals its true persona, regardless of its physical semblance. Moreover, the acting is some of the finest ever in a PC game. But even so, *Sanitarium*'s real selling point is its gripping story line.

Inspired by past episodes of the inimitable science fiction series *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*, the game's theme is complex and highly elusive. After a short prologue that details an inexplicable car accident, you awaken in a dank, dilapidated sanitarium

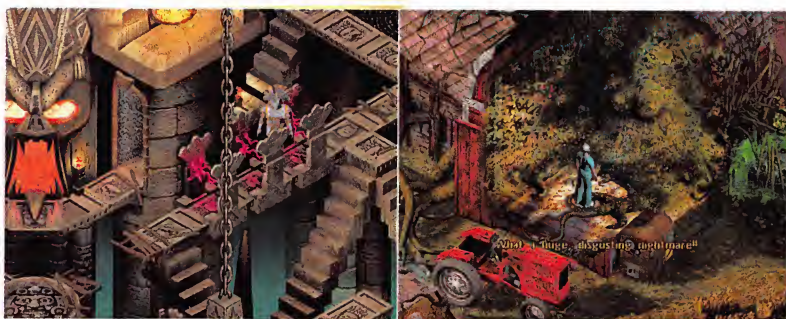


crawling with gibbering lunatics, masochistic fools, and clucking crones. Without any knowledge of your name, where you are, or how you got there, you begin to investigate your surroundings in search of answers. But traveling through the game's disjointed chapters just brings about more questions. Pay a visit to the enigmatic town of Genet, a quaint community governed

by a hideous alien life form and wholly populated by grotesquely deformed children. Explore a haunting freak circus (think: *Something Wicked This Way Comes*) on an isolated island that is

forever tormented by a detestable squid beast. Search through a spooky, nauseating sepia-hued rendition of your childhood home. Discover an all but decimated Mayan civilization held in the clutches of a fallen Aztec god. And interspersed throughout the game's episodes are various CG sequences that evoke your character's past experiences. The question is, how does everything relate? Finding the common symbolism hidden within these deviously distant scenes is the key to unlocking *Sanitarium's* mystery, and revealing more would surely spoil the fun.

As complex as its back-story may be, *Sanitarium's* gameplay is simple and well balanced. Control requires nothing more than a mouse (the keyboard is only necessary for setting options and saving your game), and unlike many of the more frustrating point-and-click adventures, key items are easily spotted and their purpose is usually clear: use a shovel to dig up a grave, pick a lock with a fine needle, fill an urn with ashes. The game also employs a number of mechanical and word-based puzzles



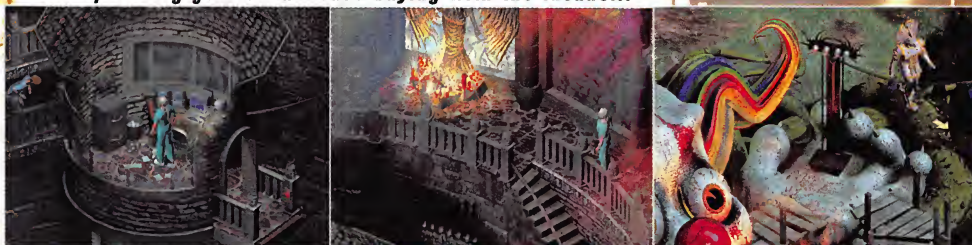
that require a bit more effort and interaction than others, but still nothing here obligates anything more than common sense and thankfully all rewards are immediate. And surprisingly, breaking up the game's naturally slow flow, some action-based battles were tossed into the mix.

Ultimately, *Sanitarium* is a winner no matter how you look at it and the game will likely send a message to those who believe that this genre has nothing more to offer. DreamForge spent two years perfecting the game, and much effort was devoted to its winding plot. The result is obvious: an enthralling and utterly addictive mystery that keeps you on the edge of your seat right up to the climactic end. Which leads to my only complaint; it has an end. ☹

Demons from the past



A sprawling gothic madhouse baying with the insane...



■ VERY ADDICTIVE AND GRIPPING STORY LINE
■ HIGHLY ORIGINAL ARTISTIC APPEAL

■ WELL-BALANCED GAMEPLAY THAT NEVER FRUSTRATES
■ EXEMPLARY VOICE-ACTING ADDS EVEN MORE REALISM

REPUBLIC SAYS...

EERIE, IRRATIONAL AND THOROUGHLY ABSORBING... *SANITARIUM* SITS HIGH ABOVE OTHER POINT-AND-CLICK GRAPHIC ADVENTURES AND PROVIDES A HAIR-RAISING EXPERIENCE.



ARMY MEN

DEVELOPER: 3DO PUBLISHER: 3DO AVAILABLE: NOW

I remember digging in the backyard just to create a battleground, meticulously placing each soldier (bazooka men perched high, grenadiers and riflemen low and forward), and finally positioning the tanks and jeeps before the final push. And even on a cold day, the stiff plastic renditions came to life in brilliant fashion as the battle ensued. Green usually won. Our childhood experiences have been resurrected in grand fashion with 3DO's game, but just as we have grown up, so have the army men. Replacing our imaginations with keystrokes, the digital plastic marines fluently animate, switch weapons, follow orders, jump into vehicles, and reduce the enemy to plastic shrapnel or flame-thrower induced shiny puddles. And with two genuine replicas of the soldiers packaged with the game, who could ask for more? Something tells me that each and every pair of eyes focusing upon this review will find it easy to relate to my childlike excitement regarding 3DO's *Army Men*. ☺

B



FORSAKEN

DEVELOPER: PROBE PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM AVAILABLE: NOW

Does a visually stunning game immediately translate to an engrossing experience? Not exactly, and, unfortunately, Acclaim's *Forsaken* is proof. Based on visuals alone, the game is *crème de la crème*, but having your eyes practically glaze over in awe does nothing to support what little depth there is here. And to make matters worse, the confined and muddled level design doesn't exactly promote reality. Then again, we must remind ourselves that this game never purports to be an accurate simulation; it is merely an arcade experience. Saving the game from being shelved after the first time through, the multi-player option is great fun and quite addicting (although nowhere near the insanity that is *Quake 2*, we switched back to id's classic after six hours or so), which keeps the replay value high for anyone on a network. Regardless of its shortcomings, *Forsaken* is optical bliss, and for some – particularly 3Dfx owners – it will be well worth its price. ☺

B-



GRANSTREAM SAGA

DEVELOPER: CHASE PUBLISHER: THQ AVAILABLE: NOW

Granstream Saga's overall story line is highly traditional, but it engages a clever mix of gameplay styles that make the experience wholly original. The adventure transpires in a 3D world viewed through a camera eye that is fixed several feet above the game's main character, Eon. As he travels through the game's many lush smoothly scrolling environments, one game comes to mind: *Loaded*. Of course, *The Granstream Saga's* environments are nothing like the grim and gloomy worlds of *Loaded*. Additionally, the game is spotted with relatively simple sequences that act as a subtle catalyst for its plot. But what makes the strongest impact here is the game's real-time nature. Seamlessly blending exploration with fighting scenes, the game takes on an action-oriented flavor that is outright refreshing. With a strongly conventional yet effective story line and an original presentation, *The Granstream Saga* is entertaining enough to warrant a look by any fan of the RPG genre. ☺

B



MIGHT & MAGIC VI

DEVELOPER: NEW WORLD PUBLISHER: 3DO AVAILABLE: NOW

A *Might and Magic* adventure in a real-time height-mapped 3D polygon world is certainly an intriguing concept, but barring its unprecedented length, this sixth installment, *The Mandate of Heaven*, proves to be a bit of a let down. In its favor, the game is one of the longest and most detailed RPG experiences ever crafted, and anyone familiar with the series will feel right at home with its character driven gameplay and story line. Additionally, the game expands upon its predecessors with extended character development and a flexible engine that allows players to switch between real-time and turned-based modes on the fly. However, the experience would be so much more legitimate if it supported 3Dfx and was devoid of its laughable character visages and voice acting (portrayed by live actors). Some fans of the series will disregard these maladies, but *M&M 6* unfortunately lands in my bin of tremendous potential wasted. ☹

C



STAR WARS REBELLION

DEVELOPER: PUBLISHER: LUCAS ARTS AVAILABLE: NOW

With such a rich and expansive universe, not to mention a background that's based on Galaxy-wide conflict, it's a wonder why Lucasarts took this long to bring out a solid strategy game based on the *Star Wars* mythos. Unfortunately, *Rebellion* fails to deliver the experience I would expect from a game of this scale, mainly do to the fact it's plagued with an unnecessarily tedious interface - resulting in gameplay that unbearably lags at times. Excusing the over-zealous and confusing interface, *Rebellion* stays true to its roots by giving you strong (abet slow) overall experience drenched in the *Star Wars* theme. Playing as either the Imperials or Rebel Alliance, you'll control or interact with nearly every character in the *SW* universe, as you attempt to convert or conquer all the planets on the map. It's a laborious process that has a few great points for *Star Wars* fans, but *Rebellion* isn't quite good enough for folks who care about the strategic elements alone. ☹

C+



WETRIX

DEVELOPER: ZED TWO PUBLISHER: OCEAN AVAILABLE: NOW

The struggle for original puzzle game ideas continues. This latest attempt employs a novel concept, that of using vaguely *Tetris*-like pieces to create water holding shapes over a small square surface. As differing volumes of water fall from above, a selection of shapes must be arranged to form water-tight walls and mini-structures to keep the water from flowing off the edge of the playfield. If too much water leaks out, it's game over. Any good puzzler needs a two player mode, and *Wetrix* delivers only a passable one. Working in a split screen, there's very little interaction between the two players. Doing really well doesn't 'send' anything over to the other side, so you end up just playing to see who can last longer. There's none of the screaming or intensity of a *Bust a Move* or *Puzzle Fighter* game. Still, I enjoyed this game for a few hours, finding a strange satisfaction from forming these three dimensional water holding forms. Good tunes in one player mode, too. >=

B



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gr sports

This month we have enticing previews of all the latest and greatest sports titles from Sony, Konami, and Acclaim. Highlights include Konami's spectacular upcoming ISS update and Acclaim's incredible Quarterback Club '99. We also have a few spot-on reviews for Jeremy McGrath's Supercross '98, VR Baseball '99, and the fantastic Hot Shots Golf.

NCAA GameBreaker '99

developer:sisa publisher:sony available:fall 98

Beefing up the 3D engine and concentrating on a wealth of plays - well over 2,200 designed by college coaches - NCAA GameBreaker '99 will also support analog and dual shock control. The players, scaled to actual sizes, are looking gorgeous. If the emphasis on an improved look doesn't detract from the play, consider the competition crushed.



Bottom of the 9th '99

developer:konami publisher:konami avail:fall 98

Make it pretty, and they will come. Bottom of the 9th '99 is getting a much needed facial, and now that the notable gameplay is being complimented by a powerful graphics engine, there is finally a baseball game to get worked up about... maybe even worth our money.



International Superstar Soccer '98

developer:konami publisher:konami available:fall 98

Konami's fantastic soccer game stunned people last year as it excelled amidst a selection of poor N64 footy offerings. Although EA's World Cup '98 is a serious contender, don't be surprised to see the smooth gameplay of ISS '99 conquer the market once again. The engine is certainly one of the strongest in the genre, and the unparalleled analog control has actually improved since last year.



Gameday '99

developer:sisa publisher:sony available:fall 98

We can't wait for this one. Sony has somehow completely revamped the engine to produce an even cleaner looking, faster moving game of pigskin. Also, the game moves differently as a result of the enhanced AI. Not a whole lot has been improved ('98 doesn't need much improvement!) but Sony assures us they'll take the football crown again this year. With heated polygonal competition coming from Madden, that's a bold statement.



NHL Faceoff '99

developer:sisa publisher:sony available:fall 98

Last year, EA's Hockey benefited from the best controls in the genre, but it wasn't the best looking. That title clearly belonged to NHL Faceoff. This year they've returned to the drawing board and cleaned-up the speed and execution of many gameplay elements. Of course strong presentation has always been the strength of this series, and with twice (!) the amount of textures and 20% more polygons, Faceoff '99 won't disappoint.



NBA Jam '99

developer:acclaim publisher:acclaim available:fall 98

NBA Jam '99 is more than a typical anemic update - it's becoming an entirely retooled sports simulation. If handled correctly, the addition of a 5-on-5 simulation should alone warrant a careful look. Using the stunning high-res All-Star Baseball '99 engine for player models, the game should at least break free from its predecessors' antiquated visual mold.



NFL Quarterback Club '99

developer:acclaim publisher:acclaim available:fall 98

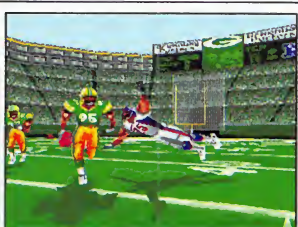
This year's installment of QB Club will show-off a brand-new motion model. This technique allows the developers unlimited access to the motion-captured frames. In effect, practically every frame taken during these mo-cap sessions can be implemented into the game. Also, the AI on both offense and defense has been refined with the help of Charlie Weiss. Be prepared to witness the stunning new engine.



NFL Extreme

developer:sisa publisher:sony available:fall 98

The creators of NFL GameDay '98 are taking their awesome knowledge of what makes a fantastic football game and shaking it up a bit: trash talking, taunting, ostentatious celebrations, and everything else the NFL players would like to have in their sport but can't because The Man will fine them. The 5-on-5 NFL Extreme is going to rock.



Jeremy McGrath Supercross

developer/publisher:acclaim available:now



Last month I mentioned that Jeremy McGrath's *Supercross '98* had a ways to go if it was to unseat the reigning Motocross king, *VMX Racing*. I'm somewhat underjoyed to report that McGrath made it part of the way, but for some reason or another fatal flaws remain in the final code. In the plus column, *Super MX* has a wide array of play modes including Full Season, Single Race (practice) and Ghost modes, along with a much-appreciated track editor where you can easily construct your own courses. The environments are impressive as well, albeit out of place if it's realistic MX thrills you're after. On the negative side, however, are two mighty important aspects of any racing game; physics and frame rate. Beginning with the frame rate because it is the most fatally flawed, I can't help but get befuddled when a clump of riders cause masses of frames to literally drop out; not slow down, but cease to exist. This takes any elements of precision dicing and pretty much flushes them down the old porcelain tornado. The psychics too, are pretty broken. Pulling back and/or sideways while airborne will actually slow your bike down, a gravitational impossibility. Rider animation when airborne is quite lame, although realistic in other places, such as around corners and down straights. For reasons beyond my comprehension, the developers didn't model the riders as they would appear in real life while in the air; the single most exciting element of the sport. This, it seems, would be the first thing one would

do in creating a realistic Motocross game and it frustrates me to no end that something so crucial has been left out. Moving on, controlling *Super MX* is made to order as you can adjust handling characteristics, configure your buttons and toggle between analog and digital control. It means little, though, as after even the hardest crash you're back up with the rest of the pack (all five of 'em) in less than half a lap, so the real race lies in the tail end of each moto most of the time. Adding insult to injury, the voice talent (which you can thankfully turn off) is horrendous, rattling off such witty phrases as "that'll rattle the nuts right off your bike!"

It just doesn't gel, I'm afraid, and it's a cryin' shame because there's a lot of potential here. Jeremy (whose name appears nowhere in the credits) may never get beaten in real life, but when it comes to racing of the PlayStation kind, he just got smoked. ⚡

Hot Shots Golf

developer:climax publisher:scea available:now



If we kept getting the usual supply of crappy, flip screen style golf games, the genre was in serious danger of attracting only the most hardcore golf fans, shunning the more general player who just wanted to sink a few putts. Whatever happened to golf games that were simply fun like



Lee Trevino's Fighting Golf back in the NES days? Climax's *Hot Shots Golf* recalls those heady days and strikes a surprisingly playable balance between fun and depth. Graphically, *Hot Shots* is really outstanding. You can see the entire hole in real time and at a smooth 30 fps. Whether you can dig the little rendered characters or not is a purely personal matter, but I certainly like them. Up to four players can compete at once, and all sorts of wacky touches like Experience Points make the entire game a really unique experience. Not to be missed by either casual or hardcore golf gamers. ⚡

VR Baseball '99

developer:interplay publisher:interplay available:now



Congratulations, Interplay—you've accomplished something so many before you haven't. You've made a great baseball game, and you've made it fast. You've cut away from the extraneous warm-ups, the drawn out celebrations, the laborious interfaces; replaced the boxes, targets, circles and multiple button combinations of the pitching interface with a marginally complex yet intuitive, menuless system, where countless locations can be met instantly.

The game is called *VR Baseball '99*, and once again, congratulations - you've actually created a game where the word "baseball" is much more than a title. A demonstrably true simulation, the ball comes off the bat like we would expect it to, where line drives scream, throws lose steam, and lazy fly balls carry forever. Realism is key, and players must react accordingly: Barry Bonds doesn't bunt, pitchers are pulled when shellacked, and Kenny Lofton scores from second on gappers and isn't restricted to a single every time he bats. If the players only looked as good as they played, now that would be something special. ⚡





Acclaim aim to strike out the 64-bit opposition...



"A stunning achievement in character animation..."

One of the most visually impressive baseball games of all time

After witnessing the players in *All Star Baseball '99* make their way onto the diamond for the first time, you'd think that somebody finally figured out how to make a true 64bit game, not a PlayStation or Saturn game with contemptible blur. A stunning achievement in character animation, each person on the field moves with an inimitable realism, obscuring the line between fantasy and reality like never before; the illusion of a ESPN high-light reel is awesomely realized.

While the animation sequences could use more variety and tend to get cut off prematurely at times, the players are a perennial treat to watch. Sure, we've seen interesting sequences in the past where players scale the fence, dive for balls, jump back from pitches, but not with such style and grace. For example, as a player strikes out and clinches his fist in frustration or looks fleetingly toward the umpire in disgust, the movements are so convincing, there is a palpable atmosphere to the game - every trip to the plate fosters a sense of being part of the action.

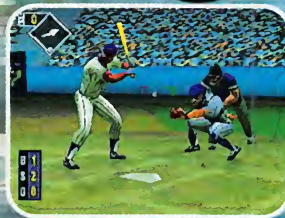
Acting as nothing more than a vehicle for the impressive visuals, the play mechanics are solid but uninspiring, a competent amalgam of typical elements from past baseball games. Interaction between pitcher and batter is carried out via a sophisticated targeting system in which a tiny circle aims the pitch. Thankfully, the pitches can be deceptive and don't necessarily follow the perceived track of the target. Turning off the ball marker all together increases the level of strategy and tension, adding greatly to the enjoyment of the game.

Presentation is such an invaluable part of *All Star Baseball '99*, where the little details mean so much to the complete experience. If Wrigley Field is where you like to play, the smallest touches are attended too - shadows creep over the field, the ivy appears nearly tangible, and the panoramic views of the stadium place you in the heart of this grandiose ballpark. If the newness of Coor's Field sounds like a cool place to host the action, make sure to check out the real-time play on the jumbo-tron. The display is strikingly real, a minor embellishment in a sea of eye-catching moments, each contributing to the overall testament of what can be accomplished in 64bit sports. Now it's time to revolutionize gameplay as well.

As good as *All Star Baseball '99* looks, there is evidence that things can only get better. Hopefully the gameplay follows suit. ✱

all star baseball '99

By Brady Fiechter



- WHEN THE GAME OPENS, YOU MAY THINK IT'S EG
- HIGH-RESOLUTION MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

- IMPRESS YOUR FRIENDS. FOUR PEOPLE CAN PLAY
- THE VISUALS ALMOST UNDERCUT THE ACTION

REPUBLIC SAYS...

AS GOOD AS ALL-STAR BASEBALL '99 LOOKS, THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THINGS CAN ONLY GET BETTER. HOPEFULLY THE GAMEPLAY WILL FOLLOW SUIT.

B

mike piazza's strike zone

By Brady Fiechter

Baseball season is here again - the crowds seem a little bit quieter, television spots seem a bit lighter, and players seem a bit more tired. It's time to bring the excitement back to the game of baseball.

Developers of videogame baseball need to do the same. *Mike Piazza's Baseball* attempts to stir the stagnant waters of the genre by fusing an arcade feel and play to its simulation aspects, and the end result initially works. Any player who can hit the ball over 800 feet, throw a curve ball that breaks in yards rather than inches, makes dazzling defensive plays and hits line drives that stop short of the fence in less than two seconds is something to get excited about.

Or at least somewhat excited. *Mike Piazza's Baseball* marginally succeeds as an arcade offering to the sport while suffering as a simulation. Turning off the arcade options or neglecting to enter codes will direct our attention to the simplicity of the simulation aspects - inauspiciously one of the game's positive points as it resurrects the old-school mode of play and dispels the tedious pace plaguing so many baseball titles today. But even simplicity needs to be competently pro-

Current roster and year-end '97 stats - trade and draft



grammed, and as the gameplay soon grows weary, our attention shifts towards the graphics - anemic motion capturing and shoddy stadiums give the game an antiquated look. So now our attention shifts yet again, coming full circle to the arcade flair which has begun to wear thin, and after sifting through the obligatory wealth of features such as create-a-player, statistical tracking, and managerial options, we realize we've been there, done that - only better. As an average playing game with some entertaining arcade embellishments, *Mike Piazza's Baseball* might have worked if not for the sloppy presentation. ✱

Create your own fantasy team and track a season with fifty stats



■ THE GAME'S FAST PACE KEEPS YOU INTERESTED
■ ENTERTAINING ARCADE PLAY SAVES THE DAY

■ EXTREMELY SIMPLE CONTROL
■ THE POOR GRAPHICS REALLY HURT THE APPEAL

REPUBLIC SAYS...

AS AN AVERAGE PLAYING GAME WITH SOME ENTERTAINING ARCADE EMBELLISHMENTS, MIKE PIAZZA'S BASEBALL MIGHT HAVE WORKED IF NOT FOR THE SLOPPY PRESENTATION.

C-



Some would say that EA's 32-bit soccer series has been on a two year sabbatical. *FIFA '96* was a competent update of the previous (and now legendary) 3DO version of the game, but subsequent versions (*FIFA '97* and *'98*) were plagued by poor controls, stuttering engines, and lackluster presentation. This year *FIFA* has become *World Cup '98*, a multi-platform tie-in to the world's biggest sporting event. Quality standards have been raised, the engine has been refined, and EA's premiere soccer franchise can finally lay claim to the gameplay crown. Whether it is the exclusive World Cup affiliation that prompted the complete overhaul, or merely a coming of age for EA's development teams, *World Cup '98* is clearly their best effort ever.

Before tackling the onslaught of game modes and details, it's important to mention the near flawless controls. Quite unlike previous *FIFA* games, control is a top priority in *World Cup '98*. In fact, the score you see on this page has been earned thanks in large part to the outstanding, immediately accessible, arcade-like controls. Using the PS or N64 analog sticks offers unprecedented player maneuverability, and the after-touch applied to passes, lobbs, and shots is incredibly controllable. The PC version played very well with a Sidewinder Pro pad, and most other eight button PC controllers are compatible and completely configurable. Player moves (such as flicks, side dashes, and fakes) are each assigned to a unique button, as well as the indispensable speed-boosts.

The play-mechanics have been expanded upon to match the high-tension international game style. On-the-fly pseudo-coaching permits play and formation changes anytime during a game, and players respond instantly and efficiently. The CPU AI will also instantly modify its playing style in response - a commendable feat. Unfortunately, the goalies are a little slow, and a tad ignorant. Well-placed shots to the upper corners of the net will usually sail past a confused, stationary goalie, and when multiple players jam the front of the goal, the poor net-minders seem to freeze-up and lose track all too often. Ah, well, just another reason to play the hyper-addic-

PlayStation

world



international




NINTENDO 64

Boasts a splendid variety of motion-captured moves and reactions. Fever pitch excitement!



tive multiplayer modes available to all three platforms.

Before this ends I must pay tribute to the graphic excellence of *World Cup '98*. The 3D accelerated version on PC is surely the finest looking soccer game of all time (high-res, stunning frame rates), the PS version offers good resolution and acceptable frame rates, and the N64 version is plagued by stuttering frame rates but enjoys surprisingly crisp resolution despite the omnipresent bi-linear filtering. What sets all versions of *World Cup '98* apart from any other soccer game available is the sheer bulk of motion-captured animations. All in-game player movement is breathtaking, and the plethora of idiosyncratic animation seen during breaks, penalties, and scoring celebrations will bring a smile to anyone's face.

This is a fine soccer game that puts the World Cup endorsement to good use. Clean presentation, an eclectic soundtrack (although you'll probably moan, as I did, when you hear Chumbawumba's "I get knocked down, I get up again..." over and over), and solid tournament options round out the package. *World Cup '98* is also a very important game for EA, as it marks their competitive return to the genre. Welcome back. 



cup '98

By Mike Griffin



- BEAUTIFUL PLAYER ANIMATION IN ALL VERSIONS
- INTUITIVE CONTROL SCHEME, ESPECIALLY ON PS ANALOG

- REALISTIC CROWD RESPONSES AND QUALITY MUSIC.
- TOP NOTCH WORLD CUP PRESENTATION AND STYLE.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

FOR ONCE EA PROVIDES EXCELLENT DETAIL AND STRONG PLAY-MECHANICS, ON TOP OF A BIG LICENSE, THEY HAVE ONLY TO FEAR SEGA'S NEW V-GOAL AND KONAMI'S ISS UPDATE.

PC CD-ROM	Playstation	Nintendo 64
B+	B	B-



World Republic Imports

Welcome to the second installment of *World Republic*. We've made a few changes this month, although some could not be implemented in time for the deadline, so expect even more in August. The hot news going into June is of course the big Sega conference where SOJ will finally unveil the Saturn's successor - Sega's 64-bit power console is officially on the way! We'll be on hand for the three day spectacle, so expect major intelligence in the August report. Also coming next month is a truck load of games on deck you won't see anywhere else, and the Treasure expose originally scheduled for this issue. We apologize for the delay, but decided it would be best to conduct the interview post Sega's big event. Treasure will likely play a key role in the new hardware's initial software line-up. Also beginning in August, we'll start our extended coverage on Japanese goods and memorabilia, so look forward to some culture as well. It is our pleasure to bring you the very best from Japan each and every month, so sit back, relax, and enjoy this month's selections.

NOTABLE IMPORT RELEASE DATES - JUNE

June PlayStation	A look into July...
6/4 World Soccer - Konami	PlayStation:
Crisis City - Takara	Fire Panic
Story that starts with T - Jaleco	Star Ocean : 2nd Story
6/11 Pocket Fighter - Capcom	Soul Divide
6/18 All Japan GT	Grand Theft Auto
Championship - Digital Frontier	Hello Charlie
Sai - Sony Music	Overblood II
TOCA Touring Car	Saturn:
Championship - Upstar	Lupin the Third
6/25 Real Bout Fatal Fury - SNK	Soul Divide
Slayers Royale - Kadokawa/ESP	Lunar 2
June: Also scheduled PS	Radiant Silvergun
Dark Messiah - Attus	Pocket Fighter
Choro Q Marine Boat - Takara	Deep Fear
Shadow Tower - From Soft	Nintendo 64:
June Saturn	Choro - Q
6/18 Linda - ASCII	Rakuga Kids
6/20 Dracula X SotN - Konami	
6/30 Galaxy Force II - Sega	
June: Also scheduled SS	
Langrisser 5 - Maysa	
June Nintendo 64	
6/4 World Cup France - Konami	
June: Also scheduled N64	
Designmon 3D - Athena	

World Republic Imports



Brave Prove by Data West

Many titles "borrow" certain elements from other games in the same genre. This sort of manifestation is often successful, leading to the refinement of play-mechanics and a generally stronger design than previous incarnations of that game type. This is a progressive phenomenon; it's usually how a genre evolves. In the case of *Brave Prove*, Data West's newest action-RPG, the amalgamation of borrowed game elements is thick and instantly obvious. You'll see a little *Zelda*, perhaps a touch of *Y's*, and a sweeping influence pipelined straight from the likes of *Legend of Oasis* and *Alundra*. Unfortunately, considering the blatant design thievery, *Brave Prove* does nothing to push the genre. In fact, it has merely taken all the proven elements of action-RPGs, bastardized them, and plopped them into a game so uninspiring its true challenge lies in keeping your interest.

Brave Prove's poor presentation doesn't help matters. If it weren't for lush background colors, these graphics could probably be executed just as well on a SNES or Genesis. With only two to three frames of animation per character, and simplistic artwork throughout, *Brave Prove* simply cannot contend with the visuals of *Oasis* or *Alundra*. The sound, too, is a mixed bag of scratchy voice samples and generic, bouncy pop tunes that do little to motivate the player.

The one resounding positive I could attribute to *Brave Prove* is length. The levels progress quickly, but with a seemingly endless selection of huge labyrinths, forests, and mountain passes to explore, you'll need a

Republic Says - C



solid couple of days to beat this game. It will require an extremely resilient gamer to actually play through each level, as they're annoyingly similar to one another, but the bulk of locations is pleasing nonetheless. The content of these levels, however, brings me back to my initial gripe: the complete lack of originality. Somehow Data West's designs have remained completely static, even with generations of action RPGs to look to for (ahem) inspiration. They've implemented traditional puzzle elements, such as moving blocks or extinguishing torches to trigger doorways, but we've all pushed and tugged our way to greater conquests in far better games. No new territory has been covered here, and they've managed to transform proven play-mechanics into painstaking monotony. The control is very good, though, even with the paltry selection of moves available to your character.

There you have it. If you enjoyed *Legend of Oasis* or *Alundra*, you'll find similar (yet inferior) action-RPG gameplay in *Brave Prove*. I am not endorsing this game, however. If you have a vested interest in the genre (as I do) you'll want to wait for a high quality game worth your time. - **MIKE GRIFFON**





Clayman Clayman by Dreamworks

Republic Says **B**



For some odd reason, The Neverhood, Doug TeNappel and companies first offering post Shiny (released here on PC last year) has made the jump to console in Japan (courtesy of Dreamworks Interactive and Riverhill Soft) but not here in the US where the clay was born. In the sea of genre duplication that is the US game scene, this is most odd as this is not only a unique PlayStation game but one of high comedy and big-time entertainment. Titled *Clayman Clayman* in Japan this baby breathes new life into the world of point n' click gaming with mind altering puzzles, killer comedy, and a soundtrack that Dr. Demento would sing in the shower. If a picture's worth a thousand words, then I guess I've said enough except to say that this is a must buy import if a US version doesn't surface in the near future. **DAVE HALVERSON**



Claymen Claymen © Dreamworks 1997, 1998.



Speed Power Gunbike by Sony Music

Republic Says **G+**



Humankind have lost sight of the sky due to the abnormal atmospheric conditions created by Michi's (a violent new breed of human) polar diastrophism (don't ask) and face certain extinction. Conventional weapons have no effect on Michi's forces and so a counter-offensive is launched using a new suicide weapon called "Gunbike", a hybrid of human and machine with massive destructive capabilities. The fate of the planet lies in the balance, so failure is not an option. What's worse is that there will be no coming home celebration. Success means certain death.

In Sony Music's *Speed Power Gunbike* you pilot the above described transforming mecha-cycle through a diversity of futuristic missions. Long winding thoroughfares laden with tanks, cyborgs, and electrically charged barriers make way to wide open spaces where bosses (or sometimes worse) await your presence. The gameplay's a speedy mix of dodging, transforming, destroying, and racing through a bleak metallic landscape. The missions are generously timed, often include mild puzzle elements and have stunning climaxes. Unfortunately, it's all brought to life via first generation polygon graphics, which wouldn't be so bad if the game ran at 60 frames rather than the standard 30. What Gunbike lacks in graphic prowess, however, it makes up for in several areas, the first of which is character design. Each multi-jointed 2-stroke rev-machine (you can choose from 3 each with varied characteristics) boasts Akira like bike design as well as roadster and full mecha-modes (and they sound like old Hodaka's!). In mech form

you can attack three ways: by rushing enemies, firing the laser cannon or performing a jump-thrust combo. The bike modes are best for high speed maneuvering but you're always just a button press away from transforming on the go, wiping out just about anything in your path as a huge mech-soldier. Gunbike's other worthy attraction are the boss encounters, which remind me somewhat of *Mega Man Dash's*, with huge mecha and live action cinematic overtones. They take place in huge arenas and provoke the player in to morphing and attacking in just the right order.

With ample play mechanics and great character design (not to mention the Sony label) you'd justifiably deem Gunbike a must have import, but the game does have some serious quirks, like tricky controls and sporadically mediocre level design. It's all wrapped in a well produced package, though with excellent real time cinematics, great voice acting (in Japanese) and perhaps the most surreal ending ever. Overall Gunbike may not be the best designed and implemented game but could warrant purchase for its excellent theme, overall uniqueness, and collectability as it is a Sony game that will never see the light of day in the US.

DAVE HALVERSON



GunBike © Sony Music 1998.

Tail Concerto by Bandai

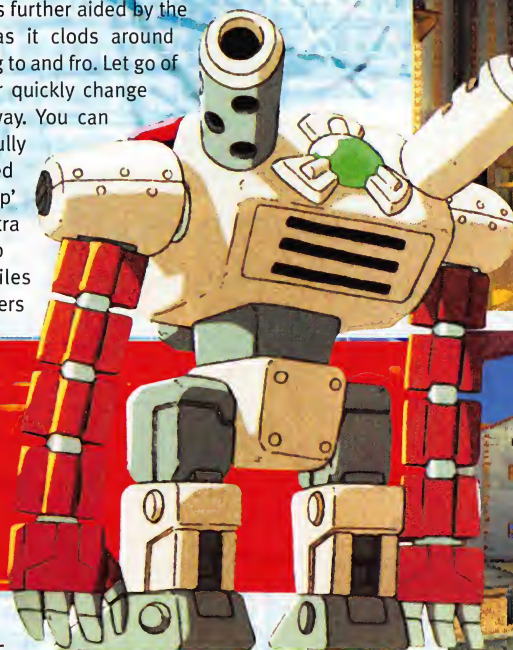
Republic Says - **B+**



Tail Concerto is an excellent, obscure title that many of you may have missed - even if you shop imports regularly. It's a low-profile Bandai game with no anime or manga tie-ins. This is hard to believe, considering the exceptional quality of the anime cut-scenes, the cute anime-style character models, and extensive amounts of voice acting in the game. Surrounding this *Mega Man Neo*-esque multiplicity of well-directed cut-scenes you'll find surprisingly varied, positively gorgeous levels to conquer. Apparently Bandai may be interested in porting (2nd or 3rd Qrt '98) *Tail Concerto* to the US. Hopefully they'll spot *TC*'s major flaws in the process and release a high-grade title cured of its minor afflictions. We shall see...

In *Tail Concerto*, you assume the role of crime-fighting Waffle Riebread, and it's your duty as a Royal Air Policeman to patrol a sky world of giant floating islands. You'll fly to each of these islands using a speedy police mini-blimp. Once you've landed, you climb into a steaming mech suit and stomp your way through the levels in search of bad-guys. The same three trouble makers will come back to wreak havoc throughout these levels, whilst new enemies, new play-mechanics, and ever-changing designs maintain your interest.

One of the true pleasures in *TC* involves the manipulation of your cool quasi-tech-no mech suit. Its response to the analog stick is 100% pressure sensitive. The effect of smooth control is further aided by the suit's incredible walking animation, as it clods around earnestly, flexi-arms powerfully swinging to and fro. Let go of the stick and you'll stop on a dime, or quickly change direction and you bank sharply that way. You can execute good-sized jumps, which are fully controllable in the air, and as an added fail-safe measure you can comically 'flap' your suit's tank tread-like arms for extra hang-time. You'll also be snatching-up boxes, items, enemies, and projectiles along the way, as well as switching levers



and pummeling objects (with a three-hit swatting no less) to reveal their contents. Your main weapon is a rapid-fire bubble gun. Once you've mastered the flowing nature of the suit, you'll be stomping around maniacally looking for something to grasp a hold of or knock around with your bubbles.

Tail Concerto's levels are presented in epic fashion. Take the warplane level for instance: You clamber atop this HUGE plane, and it's all in view all the time, as dense trails of black smoke pour from its hull and realistic clouds drift through the picture. The frame rate is locked at 30, and the texture res is crisp. There's also a jet-pack level, a mine-cart level, and numerous, truly fun free-roaming platforming levels. Everything you experience is well-designed and just dazzling to behold. And it's all complimented by a bouncy, adventurous soundtrack. *TC* could be just a little longer, however, but I can't fault an action game for being 7 to 8 hours in length. I just want more!

I'll conclude this positive rant by explaining *Tail Concerto*'s fatal flaw: poor camera control. You're only given a tilt up or down facility with the camera system. There is no left/right mechanism. It's a problem that affects fundamental gameplay on almost every level, since the auto-cam takes an eternity to roll-around with a better view! Fix this problem and the game is brilliant. Bandai, please do your best!

Mike Griffin

Tail Concerto artwork © Bandai 1998.



GunGriffin II by Game Arts**Republic Says - B**

The original *Gun Griffin* established itself as one of the most stylish and playable action-war sims of all time. With countless hard-core missions and truly inventive play-mechanics, as well as a perfect two system, two screen link-up mode, GG impressed gamers everywhere and became an instant first-generation Saturn classic. *Gun Griffin 2* promises to deliver more intense action, brought to you by the team responsible for such greats as *Grandia*.

To be honest, Game Arts has done little to improve their *Gun Griffin* engine, but this type of enhancement wasn't necessarily needed. The polygonal vehicle models are extremely well designed, and the mass of 3D environmental models are simple, yet detailed. To maintain the 24 to 30 fps frame rate, Game Arts has used the Saturn's powerful mode-7 capability to display the ground (a la *Panzer Saga*) instead of wasting loads of textured polygons. In addition, crude lighting and smoke effects have been implemented here and there. Without compromising a sci-fi/anime type of appeal, the battlefields are totally convincing.

GG2 once again forces you to master the art of attacking on the run. As you jet-slide left and right, it's wise to employ techniques such as aiming ahead of opponents, by calculating the speed of each weapon according to the maneuverability of each foe. Also, selecting a wing-man that's compatible with your style is integral to your success. Basically it's action-strategy at its best, and I'm not tiring of it yet.

If you enjoyed the original *Gun Griffin*, this sequel will do you fine. It's not much of a technical improvement over the first, but it will provide you with new missions, a continuing storyline, and more awesome two-player mech action.

MIKE GRIFFIN

GunGriffin II
© GameArts 1998.

GUNGRIFFON II

**Shining Force III by Sega****Republic Says - B+**

How can this be? It's only been a month since I reviewed the first installment of the *Shining Force 3* trilogy and I'm already playing Scenario 2! Suddenly I'm enjoying another 30 hour quest filled with more great music, more impossibly-fast loading, and dozens of beautifully orchestrated battles. As you can tell, this is an import review, and it looks like that's how Scenario 2 is going to stay. Unless another (unfathomably cool) company brings out the final two installments of the trilogy, we'll never be able to enjoy them in english because Sega of America won't commit any time or money to the follow-up.

In Scenario 2, you assume the role of one of the rival characters from the first Scenario. Sonic and Camelot's intent is for players to experience the same world and conditions during identical time frames from the point of view of different characters (from varying social classes). So in a unique twist, you'll actually cross paths with the main character from the first game whenever you travel through locations from Scenario 1. You're agenda isn't the same, however, and you're fighting for another leader, so don't expect these encounters to be friendly.

I was initially fearful that the game environments and battles would be shared between Scenarios due to the similar goals involved in each quest. Not so. Apart from identical towns here and there, as a result of the games' shared world, almost every battle is unique. New battle effects have

been instituted for spells and attacks, and gorgeous new maps have been rendered for our interminable strategic enjoyment.

It's important to realize that Scenario 2 isn't so much a sequel as it is another dimension of *Shining Force 3*. The engine is still the most efficient I've ever seen in the genre, and the playability is absolutely top notch. I'm just as excited about this game as the first Scenario, and I'll be anxiously waiting for the third. Think about it: three complete *Shining Force* quests in one year...fans have never had it this good!!!

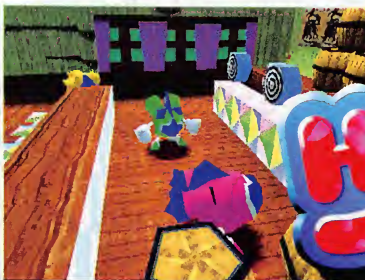


Shining Force III © Sega 1998.



TwinBee RPG by Konami

Republic Says **B-**



Wouldn't you know it. No matter how cute a place is or how adorable its inhabitants are, some damn mist comes along and knocks out all the grown ups. In this case, this is the work of the evil Warumon and ZakuBee, and the charge of restoring Donburi Island falls squarely on your shoulders. With *TwinBee's* proper pilot, Light, out of commission, it's all on you to restore peace and tranquility to the once happy Donburi.

Konami's *TwinBee RPG* has been a long time in coming, but this unique variation on one of the more fruity shooter series is pretty much what you would expect: a traditional three character Japanese RPG, with more dollops of cuteness than even your typical entry in this genre. It sports a unique look, a pleasant combination of little Gouraud shaded characters and a simply textured environment. While certainly no stunner, it is fully 3D and works as intended.

As an RPG, *TwinBee* is fairly linear. It generally breaks down with you entering a new town and solving a few rudimentary tasks before facing a minor boss. With that, the inhabitants of the town awaken and you're off on your next mini-quest. During the course of the game, you'll team with other Bees and engage in stimulating conversations with little people. It's all traditional stuff for the most part, but it plays out well, and it's little *TwinBee* guys!

A US release seems unlikely given that the game's theme and its intensely Japanese, pastel feel would probably alienate too many American gamers. However, it is straightforward enough to be played without knowing the language, so if you're into fruity stuff like this or are the rare *TwinBee* freak, you'll find a diverting little RPG here.

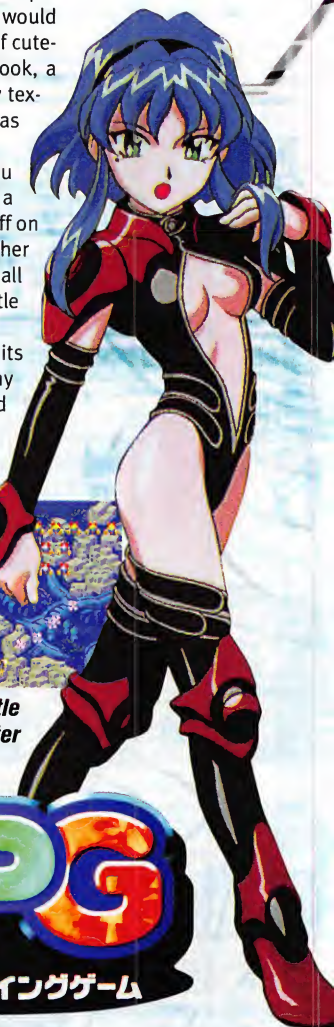
MIKE HOBBS



Hey, look at the little mini-games! More cuteness here with a little *TwinBee* Pierrot mini-shooter and a Japanese "crane" game. Later in the game, you'll fish! This is great!

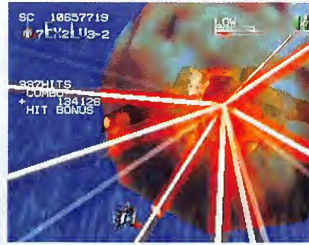
ツイーンビーRPG

ロールプレイングゲーム



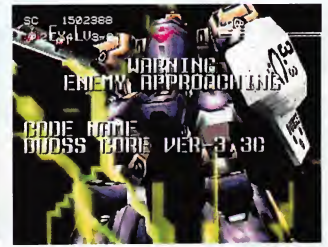
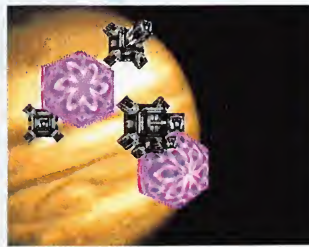
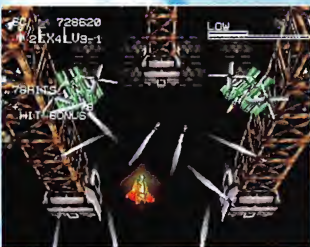
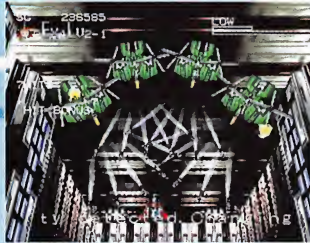
Star Soldier 64 arriving from Hudson... The tradition continues!

First came *Star Soldier* for the Famicom, followed by the legendary top-down PC Engine shooter *Super Star Soldier*. Continuing their tradition of quality Nintendo games, here's a first look at Hudson's latest 64 title, the polygon based *Star Soldier 64*. It's high time the N64 was on the receiving end of a traditional shooter (in 3D mind you) and so without further adieu here's the low-down so far. The game still employs a 2D diagonal viewpoint, although everything is now polygonal and the opening and cut scenes use the same graphics engine so everything blends together very well, similar to *Starfox*. For the most part, the stages scroll in a straight line, however, occasionally the whole stage will move in 3D as you change routes - which looks mighty impressive. Customarily, at each level's end awaits a huge mecha boss, employing



realistic movement and smooth animation. The 3D scenery is very impressive and at times even passes over your ship (momentarily transparent) providing the realistic feel of flying through a vertical passageway. There are seven missions total, however, should you fulfill certain tasks during a level, junction points will allow you access to three special missions. Like the originals, which ship you choose (from three) will determine your weapon type between Vulcan, Laser, or Wave, each of which can be powered up to level 3 status. It's Rumble Pack compatible too, so when you're hit, die, drop a huge bomb, or a big event happens, it er, rumbles. Stay tuned to the World republic for more on SS64 in issues to come!!

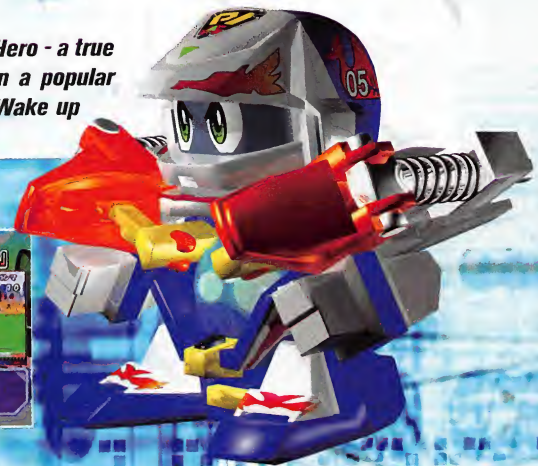
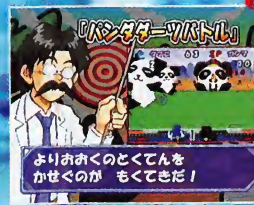
DAVE HALVERSON



More Hudson wares in the pipeline...

Next month we'll reveal Hudson's entire '98 line-up, including a look at *Bomberman Hero* - a true *Bomberman* adventure in the Mario vein, and *B-daman* a unique game based on a popular Japanese pastime. All of this *Bomberman* and no *Bonk 64*?? What gives Hudson? Wake up Red and let's have at it!!

B-Daman (N64)

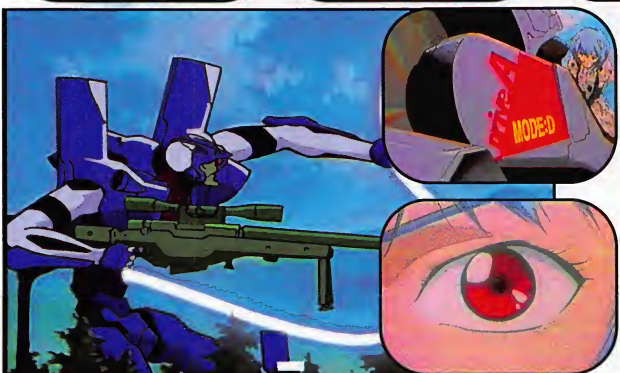
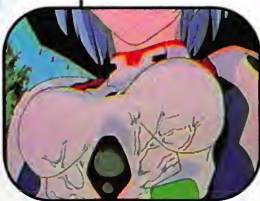


BomFantasy Race (PSX)



Bomberman Hero (N64)





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Evangelion Genesis 0:12

English Dubbed Version

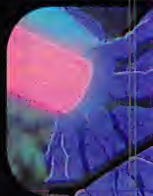
60 min.

Available now from A.D. Vision

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON

Neon Genesis Evangelion is an epic chapter in the evolution of Japanese anime that will be forever etched in the psyches of all who have followed it to this point. Episode 12 is so packed with revelation that it is hard to conceive that this is essentially a cartoon. No film has ever pierced so deep into the frailties of human life, and what lies at the core of our existence. Ever wonder about the human soul? Genesis 12 opens with a shocking revelation, as I expected. The last 3 have all brought to light extraordinary plot twists, but uncharacteristically, the revelations in 12 just keep on coming until you finally experience cerebral overload.

I repeatedly had to stop, rewind and collect myself. I hate to even hint at the true core of the Eva project now that I know, so I'm not going to. If you've not followed the series thus far you couldn't grasp it anyway, and



if you are you'll want to see this episode for yourself.

Hopefully at some point in time, all 13 hours will be aired nationally, although part of me says that would be a mistake. Perhaps *Evangelion* is best left to the comparatively small niche who have sought after it. The only thing left for me to do is take my Genesis 13 screener home and watch them all back to back. Then it will be time to begin thinking about Death and Rebirth.

Since I'll likely skip reviewing Genesis 13, as its impact goes without saying, for the record my overall review for the series lies somewhere beyond A+ . I'd like to applaud A.D. Vision for a job remarkably done, with excellent subbing and dubbing, timely releases, and excellent packaging. This will be a hard act to follow.





Ruin Explorers

English Dubbed Version

60 min.

Available now from A.D.Vision

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON

Ruin Explorers begins after a great war all but wipes out an ancient mythological civilization. Little by little survivors begin to rebuild, while others, known as Ruin Explorers, seek to uncover the powerful magic and treasure buried deep in the countless ruins of the past.

The story revolves around two main characters, Irie and Fam. Irie is a strong warrior, but had the misfortune of messing around in an old sorcerers lab when she was a child. The crabby old spellcaster put a curse on Irie and now every time she uses magic, she turns into a mouse! To change back she must take special tablets, but these are in short supply. So, Irie relies heavily on her partner, Fam, who can use

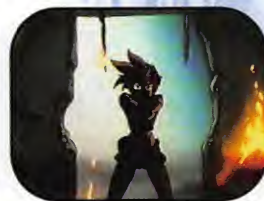
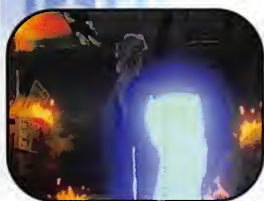


magic at will (providing the spirits are in agreement). Fam is an adorable Wiggan, (half human half squirrel) and is at one with the spirits, although she's not the most confident spellcaster and often causes more trouble than she foils. As the pair explore ancient ruins it's Fam's job to sniff out the traps while Irie does the dirty work.

The pair seek most emphatically the "Ultimate Power", a powerful magic that once endowed an entire kingdom with wealth and prosperity, but ultimately consumed the king who wielded it. We soon find out that there are others who seek the power as well, and this is where *Ruin Explorers* brilliant character development becomes apparent. Galuff, a traveling merchant/con-man, and his scruffy little dog Gil, are the first we encounter. Galuff conveniently produces a map pinpointing the exact location of the Ultimate Power and uses it to get Irie and Fam to lead him and his cohorts, Raja and Migel, to the chamber where it is supposedly held. Raja and Migel are two more excellent characters. Migel is especially colorful. The first thing we hear him say, "The great Migel needs no armor! In over 100 battles no man has ever cut me, from the tip of my toe nails to my dainty brown nose hairs," pretty much says it all. Of course moments later an unarmed Irie pummels him to which he whimpers, "am I cut?" In episode 2 we meet the final party member, Prince Lyle, whom Fam finds in the woods after separating from Irie after she begins to take her for granted. Eventually all of these characters find a common ground and set out together in a grandiose RPG style. It's a great story and it's one of the best dubs I've ever heard. The art style, motif (Indiana Jones meets Slayers) and production values are all top notch. I haven't been this keen on a

new series since *Burn Up W*. ADV certainly know how to pick the winners out of a sea of possible candidates. I recommend highly *Ruin Explorers* to die hard fans and new comers alike.





Dirty Pair Act 2

English Subtitled Version

60 min.

Available now from A.D.Vision

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON

Those of you coming off of *Dirty Pair Flash Act 1* are probably expecting little more than some light titillation from Act 2, and hey, what's wrong with that? Hot babes, guns, and a little espionage have always been a winning combination.

Surprisingly, however, *Dirty Pair Flash* is evolving! While retaining its sexy edge we are now privy to some much needed character development and some added depth to the story. The *Bond*-like feel I expected from the series has emerged. The relationship between Yuri and Kei has escalated from part 1's bitch-fest to an underlying current (OK so, it's buried) of respect,

acts as supreme overlord and holds an entire world of his own design captive to his fiendish ways. When Yuri enters this dream state a *Valis*-like adventure ensues as she makes her way up the black tower and ultimately into the professor's lair. All the while Kei (after quitting the 3WA!) is secretly working the other end from the real world. In between there's lots of carnage along with some interesting new characters like Flair, the hit woman hired to kill Kaps, and Waldess, the evil industrialist bent on ruling the galaxy, who hires her. Rounding out Act 2, the animation actually is better, with more effects and several well produced battles.

Dirty Pair Act 2 takes us on an adventure from the frozen ocean of Jyai-Sulmail to the very core of a cracked professor's psyche, and it's a ride worth taking. In



anime
republic



dirty pair flash act 2

although they'll never admit it, and finally revolves around more than just the dirty duo and some faceless criminals. The story begins where Act 1 left off with the card-key they so eloquently delivered last time being cracked by the brilliant Professor Kaps. Unfortunately the Professor's got an expensive habit that he's leveraged the card to support. Using it for, ahem, capitol gain, he blackmails all the wrong people and eventually snaps, completely submerging himself into the virtual world to which he is so addicted. There, he

this case, however, I'd recommend the Subtitled route. The English dub isn't bad and I found Kei and Yuri somewhat miscast. Either way, *Dirty Pair Flash Act 2*, (and 3 for that matter which I didn't have room) are both excellent.



ANNOUNCEMENTS>>>

A.D.V. Films, the people who brought us *Gunsmith Cats*, *Evangelion*, *Burn-Up W*, and too many more banner titles to list, have landed the mother load of game related anime! To be released this Q3-4 look for the *Tekken* movie and three powerhouse Sega OVA's: *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Panzer Dragoon*, and *Sakura Taisen*!! Also coming soon, look for *Burn-Up V*, the sequel to *Burn-Up W*!!

Elsewhere Manga Entertainment are hard at work on June's *Sword for Truth* and *Tokyo Fist* and July's *Fist of the North Star Vol. 1*. We'll be back with more announcements, reviews, and surprises next month.



news flash

The Wanderers: El-Hazard

English dubbed Version

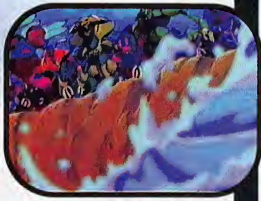
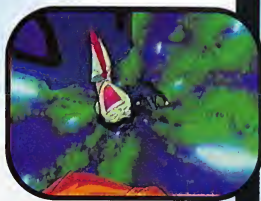
5 VHS Cassettes

85 min. each

Available now from Pioneer

REVIEWED BY BOB BEARD

In anime, no Japanese high school is without its surprises and Shinonome High is no exception. Drawn to the strange alien ruins discovered beneath the school, student Makoto Mizuhara awakens a beautiful girl who claims to have been waiting 10,000 years for him to show up, and transports him across time and space to the world of El-Hazard. Caught up in the spell and transported along with him are Makoto's alcoholic teacher Mr Fujisawa, his would-be-girlfriend Nanami Jinnai, and her brother (and self proclaimed arch enemy of Makoto) the megalomaniac, scheming Katsuhiro. From the production team of Tenchi Muyo, El-Hazard is an example of anime at it's best. The Allied Kingdoms are a cross between the *Arabian Nights* and *Star Wars*, in stark contrast to the alien realms of their enemy, the insectoid Bugrom. The war between these two forces has reached stalemate, until the arrival of the four hapless earthlings in their midst. Mako-



to and Mr Fujisawa get off to a good start by rescuing a local princess, RuneVenus, from the Bugrom when Mr Fujisawa discovers he has developed superhuman strength (as long as he can remain sober). Princess Rune along with her sister Fatora have kept the Bugrom at bay, because between them they control an ancient doomsday weapon, the 'Eye of God'. Unfortunately, Fatora has disappeared, and Makoto looks just like her! Meanwhile, Katsuhiro is captured by the Bugrom and manages to get himself elected General of the Bugrom armies (and starts renaming them after the Marx brothers). By teaching the giant bugs to lie, cheat and generally be unpleasant he embarks on a remarkably successful campaign to conquer the whole of El-Hazard. And what of Nanami? Finding herself marooned on an alien world she does what any sensible girl would do and gets a job. Makoto's day goes from bad to worse when the Allies decide that to defeat the Bugrom they must unseal the Eye of God and send a small entourage to Mount Muldoon, where three priestesses guard the power (when they're not out shopping, of course).

Up against an ultimate weapon Katsuhiro tries to capture his own ancient doomsday weapon, the terrible Demon God Ifurita, who looks remarkably familiar. And behind the scenes, the mysterious Phantom tribe are manipulating both sides into starting a war which could destroy the world. With global catastrophe looming, Makoto and crew must answer some tough questions, namely: when you're stranded a billion light years from home where do you buy cigarettes; why do they always schedule important meetings when you need to go to the toilet; and what's the most fashionable way to wear a cat? Weird and beautiful by turns, El-Hazard should appeal to any anime fan.

The Ultimate
Vampire Animation

PIONEER
The Art of Entertainment

NIGHT WARRIORS

Darkstalkers' Revenge

Volume 1 Coming
June 30, 1998

English
Dubbed \$19⁹⁵
S.R.P.

English
Subtitled \$24⁹⁵
S.R.P.

The Ultimate Fighting Game Anime!

After stealing the sun and plunging the Earth into darkness, the Vampire Lord Demitri plans his return to and conquest of the Demon World as other creatures of the Dark and the oppressed humans plot against him! All of the amazing monster characters from the hit Capcom franchise square off in exciting battle after battle in this stunningly animated series based upon the arcade and Sega game *Night Warriors* (AKA: *Darkstalkers/Vampire Hunters*). Look for a new Capcom release for the Playstation this fall, and don't miss this exciting four volume series on video!

VIZ VIDEO

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our website at www.pioneeranimation.com

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A.D.V. FILMS

presents

The Gamers' Republic

Top Five Anime

Gamers' Republic Editors' Top Five

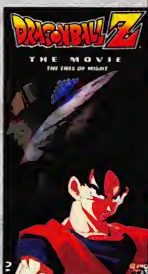
D. Halverson

1. Evangelion ADV
2. Ruin Explorers ADV
3. LandLock Manga Video
4. Dirty Pair Flash ADV
5. El Hazard Pioneer



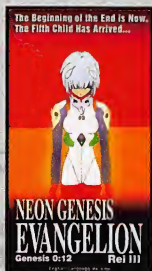
M. Melton

1. Dragon Ball Z VIZ
2. Ramna 1/2 VIZ
3. Slayers Software Sculptures
4. El Hazard Pioneer
5. Escaflowne



R. Lockhart

1. Evangelion ADV
2. Goldenboy ADV
3. Macross Plus Manga Video
4. Ruin Explorers ADV
5. Darkstalkers VIZ



Gamers' Republic Readers' Top Five

1. TO BE DETERMINED...
2. TO BE DETERMINED...
3. TO BE DETERMINED...
4. TO BE DETERMINED...
5. BY YOU!



Top Five Anime Contest!

To enter the ADV/Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime Contest, simply send us a list of your favorite five anime, new or old. Make sure to include your name, address and age and send it to: **Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 218, Westlake Village, CA 91361.** First prize is Shinji's EVA-01 (which stands over 20" inches tall) and Evangelion 1 through 12!! Second Prize: Any two ADV releases and an ADV T-Shirt. Third Prize: Any 1 ADV release. All three winners receive a GR subscription. For your free ADV catalog (and this is one cool catalog) write to: **AD Vision, 5750 Blintiff #217, Houston, TX 77036.**

No purchase necessary, void where prohibited, not responsible for lost or damaged luggage, objects in mirror may be closer than they appear.



Jedi knight: mysteries of sith

TO ENTER CHEAT MODE, PRESS 'T' AND ENTER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CODES TO ACTIVATE THE CORRESPONDING CHEAT FUNCTION.

UBER JEDI-UNLIMITED FULL FORCE POWERS
iamagod

ALL WEAPONS
diediedie

FULL INVENTORY
gimmestuff

DISABLE AI
statuesque 1

ENABLE AI
statuesque 0

INCREASE FORCE LEVEL
trainme

FLY
freebird

ENABLE INVINCIBILITY
boinga 1

DISABLE INVINCIBILITY
boinga 0

FULL MANA
trixe

FULL MAP
cartograph

PC
CD
ROM

codeX republica

THIS MONTH'S CODEX OPENS WITH A SUITE OF CHEATS FOR LUCASART'S EXCELLENT JEDI KNIGHT EXPANSION KIT MYSTERIES OF THE SITH. NOT THAT ANY SELF RESPECTING JEDI WOULD CHEAT, MIND.



PC
CD
ROM

3DO'S FUNKY PLASTIC ARMY MAN GAME HAS A WEALTH OF COOL LITTLE CHEAT CODES TO RUIN THE GAME FOR YOU.

CHEAT MODE
Press Escape and type one of the following codes to activate the corresponding cheat function.

LOSE MISSION
succumb

WIN MISSION
triumph

TOGGLE OPPONENT VIEW
omniscient

TOGGLE RIGHT BUTTON EXPLOSION
pyromancer

OPPONENTS PAUSED
paralysis

TELEPORT SARGE
aeroballistics (enter scroll mode then enable)

FULL AIR SUPPORT
telekinetic

FULL AMMO
plethora

STEALTH MODE
occultation

INVINCIBLE SARGE INVULNERABLE
Enable explosions, opponent view, kahuna invincible sarge



army
men



vampire savior: jedah's damnation

CAPCOM'S BRILLIANT CONVERSION OF VAMPIRE SAVIOR COMES COMPLETE WITH THE USUAL ASSORTMENT OF HIDDEN GOODIES.

BONUS OPTIONS

Beat the game under any difficulty setting and without using any continues. Hold L and R and go to the options menu. RGB, life bar and English language options should now be available.

FIGHT AGAINST OBORO BISHAMON

Beat the game without losing a rounds and use at least 3 EX special finishing moves.

FIGHT AS OBORO BISHAMON

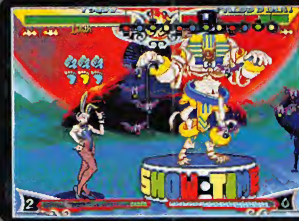
Use the above technique to reach Oboro Bishamon and defeat him. At the character select screen, highlight Bishamon and hold L as you select him.

FIGHT AS D. GALLON

Highlight Gallon at the character selection screen and hold L and press all three Punch buttons.

FIGHT AS FALLEN FOE

Highlight the Random Select icon and press L and R together four times. Then, hold L and R and press all three Punch buttons. The Soul Stealer should appear behind your character, confirming proper code entry. Begin the game and defeat an opponent. The Soul Stealer should appear during the victory pose. The defeated character may now be controlled in the next match.



silhouette mirage



FOR ALL THOSE ADVENTUROUS IMPORT SHOPPERS OUT THERE, HERE IS A CHEAT CODE FOR TREASURE'S FANTASTIC SILHOUETTE MIRAGE.

CHEAT MODE

Press X, B, Z, Start at the Treasure logo. An option menu with level difficulty, debug mode, and sound test selections will appear. Enable debug mode and begin game play for level selection and unlimited gold. Pause game play in debug mode and press L or R and A, B, C, X, Y, and Z to access other screen options.

CONTINUE

Choose the second option on the menu after losing the game. Press Start at the title screen to resume game play at the beginning of the last level played.



THIS FUN LITTLE SNOWBOARDING GAME DESERVES A FUN LITTLE CODE!

Enter this code at the title screen when all the little characters are standing about. Down on the stick, up on the stick, down on D-pad, up on D-pad, down C, up C, L shoulder, R shoulder, Z, left on D-pad, right C, up on the stick, B, right on D-pad, left C, and up and you can play as the secret little ninja character Sinobin. This code also lets you play as the same character in multiplayer mode.

snowboard kids

burning rangers

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL FOUR MISSIONS BEFORE THESE CODES ARE WORTH THE PAPER THEY'RE PRINTED ON.

PLAY AS BIG RANGER

Enter 3BIG2BPLCK as a password.

PLAY AS BURNING RANGER LEADER

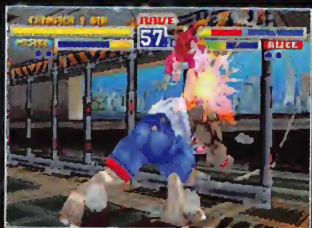
Enter GS4LEAD2ZU as a password.

HIDDEN IMAGES AND SOUNDS

Put the game disc in a PC compatible CD-ROM drive. Look in the "EXTRAS" directory to find images and sound files from the game.



bloody roar



OPEN UP DIFFERENT CHARACTERS IN THIS AWESOME
LOOKING GUNDAM FIGHTER!

PLAY AS MA-08 BYGZAM

Complete story mode under the easy difficulty level.

PLAY AS AMX-002 NEUE-ZIEL

Complete story mode under the normal difficulty level.

PLAY AS PSYCHO GUNDAM MK III

Complete story mode under the hard difficulty level.

PLAY AS 02-15 AGX HYDRA GUNDAM

Complete story mode under the hard difficulty level
without continuing.

PLAY AS BALL

Complete the game with all twelve mobile suits.

PLAY AS CHAR AZNABLE'S RED ZAKU II

Press L1x4, R1x4, L1, R1, L1, R1, L1, R1, L1, R1 at the
main menu. A sound will confirm proper code entry.
Select versus mode and continue to press right.



BIG HEAD MODE

Select normal mode. Highlight a fighter on the character selection screen. Then, hold L2 and press Circle.

SMALL FIGHTERS

Highlight a fighter on the character selection screen. Then, hold R2 and press Circle.

LARGE ARMS

Hold L1 + L2 and select a character. Alternatively, Complete the game on level 4 or higher without using any continues.

SMALLER RING

Complete the game on level 4 or higher using Greg.

NO WALLS IN RING

Complete the game on level 4 or higher using Mitsuko.

REGENERATING ENERGY

Select Bakuryu as a fighter and complete the game on level 4 or higher.

PSYCHEDELIC MODE

Complete the game on level 4 or higher using all the characters.

DISABLE LIGHTNING

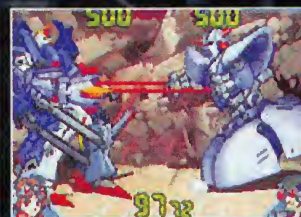
Complete the game on level 4 or higher using Long.

BONUS GRAPHICS

Complete the game in arcade mode to view the corresponding character's ending. Press Left or Right to view different scenes.

CONTROL CAMERA

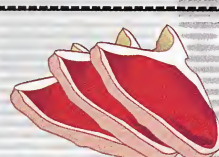
Complete the game on level 4 or higher using Alice.



THAT WRAPS UP CODEX REPUBLICA FOR THIS MONTH. LOOK RIGHT
HERE FOR SOME KILLER POST-E3 CODE ACTION NEXT ISSUE!

gundam: the battle master 2

Doom was more than just a pseudo sequel to Wolfenstein 3D. It was a revolution. It was an H-Bomb from which the industry is still experiencing fallout. In one fell swoop, id Software simultaneously re-invented a genre, vindicated the Shareware sales model, pushed network multi-player gaming in an exciting new direction, and generally did more to further the cause of the PC as a legitimate games platform than any of other title in PC history. Yessiree Bob, Doom sure kicked a whole lot of ass. But what was really amazing was the public response. Doom struck a chord with the rapidly expanding internet gaming community and inspired an unprecedented display of consumer level support. Long after Doom stopped selling, the game was still being played. Thousands of user created non-commercial maps, modifications and utilities appeared on web sites and cover CDs the world over, many of which equaled (and in some cases surpassed) the quality of id's original design. Thanks to this kind of continued fan devotion, Doom took on an extracurricular life of its own beyond the constraints of the original retail release - a life that has both survived to this day (check out www.teamtnt.com or www.frag.com/doom/) and been inherited by each successive id Software title. Doom 2 was basically Doom Plus. No revelations, no new twists, just more of the same. Quake, on the other hand, offered several significant developments that once again turned the genre on its head. True 3D environments and characters, native internet support, a client/server structure that allowed players to drop in and out of games at will, and perhaps most topically, 3D accelerator support. It would be ridiculous to suggest that 3D acceleration went from being the luxury of the rich to an essential component of the modern day gaming PC just because of GL Quake, but it sure as hell helped! Which brings us to Quake 2. In many ways Quake 2 is to Quake, what Doom 2 was to Doom. There are no technological breakthroughs or revolutionary gameplay features to be found. However, that analogy really sells Quake 2 short. In my opinion, it is everything that Quake should have been to go with the technology - a well structured single player game and a balanced multiplayer one (not to mention seriously addictive). It has been nearly six months since Quake 2 was released, and we at the Republic still find time to death-match on a nightly basis. Things may have changed at id over the past few years, but if they can keep turning out games like Quake 2, you can bet your bottom dollar we'll keep coming back for more.



giblets

gib•lets (jib' lits) plural noun
[The edible heart, liver, gizzard or entrails of a freshly gibbed opponent and/or opponents.]

The Mod Squads are at it again...

News, patches, and mods to aid you in the quest for quake 2 atonement...

STROGGS GONE MAD!

Think you've mastered the solo Q2 experience? Think again! Version 1.1.00 of Legion's *Stroggs Gone Mad* is now available for download over at www.inside3d.com/legion/, and SGM is a mod designed to enhance the single-player side of *Quake 2* by significantly beefing up the AI of all the computer controlled enemies. Good news for all you single player/co-op Q2 nuts out there.

MOD OF THE MONTH



LOKI'S MINIONS CAPTURE THE FLAG

[HTTP://WWW.PLANETQUAKE.COM/LMCTF/](http://www.planetquake.com/LMCTF/)

Loki's Minions CTF is an add on for *Quake 2* that takes the basic gameplay of Zoid's original *Q2 Capture The Flag* modification and builds on it with new maps, new graphics, new weapon properties, and a couple of other tweaks that further enhance the experience. But the coolest aspect is definitely the theme: Cops Vs Robbers! The new player skins are excellent and from a gameplay standpoint make it much easier to differentiate between teammates and opponents! There's even a 'downtown' level that is set in and around a modern day city, *Duke Nukem 3D* style. The perfect setting to live out all your *Dirty Harry* fantasies! The rest of the levels are equally well designed, with loads of new graphics and some imaginative settings. The stock blaster has been pumped up a bit, the BFG has been toned way down (amusingly so, note the advert below). Overall, an excellent mod that is well worth a look.

LIFE IMITATING QUAKE?

As the number of Q2 Total Conversions increases, the source material grows ever stranger. Recently announced Q2 TCs include *Ghost in the Shell*, *Watership Down* (!!!), *Rollerball*, *Jurassic Park*, *Starship Troopers* and even *South Park*! Now you too can kill Kenny. Why? "Because he's poor!"



QUAKE 3 UPDATE

Well, after the shock announcement a few months back that id would be working on *Quake 3* before *Trinity*, the info is slowly starting to trickle in. Apparently *Quake 3* will continue the storyline of *Quake 2* (unlike *Quake 2* did with *Quake*), so expect to see a similar theme and setting as before. According to id head honcho John Carmack, the levels will be at least twice as complex as *Quake 2*, and the engine will feature all kinds of yummy graphical treats like curved surfaces, 24 bit color, bump mapping, displacement maps and bezier interpolation. No, I have no idea what bezier interpolation is either. I do know that *Quake 3* will REQUIRE a 3D accelerator to run and is tentatively slated for first quarter '99. In the mean time, check out this character model that id created while experimenting with Q3 technology. Looks rather good...



Amusing ads and signage are strewn about the walls of LMCTF3 "meanstreets."

SPOTLIGHT

GR QUAKE FIENDS SPEAKS OUT WITH PROFOUND WISDOM ON "THE JOY OF SLUGS!"



Ah the Railgun! How do I love thee? Let me count the ways! *Quake 2*'s armory may be mostly just a rehash of old weapons from previous id games, but the Railgun more than makes up for any such shortcomings! Finally a weapon that rewards the true marksman among us! None of this area effect or rapid fire nonsense for me! A clean hit is a good hit! Most players like to use the Railgun exclusively as a sniper/camper/voyeur weapon – standing (crouching) still and taking pot shots from a safe distance...

But not me! There is nothing more satisfying than getting right in your opponent's face and nailing them with one well-placed slug before they even get a shot off. Of course, to effectively use the Railgun at close quarters you must a) have a good ping and b) be able to predicate your opponent's movements consistently. I find using the Rocket Launcher a lot is the greatest training for the Railgun as both weapons involve an element of tracking and prediction. However, the Railgun is by far the most deadly in Capture the Flag games when you can combine it with a Tech like Strength or Haste to devastating effect. Plus it is much easier to track an enemy when they are fighting someone other than you!



The Railgun is not the easiest weapon to use, and definitely not the most practical, but is by far and away my favorite!



FINAL ENTRIES

INCREDIBLE PATCHES ADD EVEN MORE TO THE EXPERIENCE!

[HTTP://WWW.QUAKEWORLD.COM/MODS](http://www.quakeworld.com/mods)



To round off our first look at the pillaging and general tweaking of *Quake 2*, we'll run through some of the cooler patches and models currently available over at Quakeworld. Most exciting of all is the Vweapons patch, allowing players to view what their opponents are carrying in multi-player mode. Rocket Launchers (left) look chunkier, while the Railgun looks suitably impressive (right). Of course, with this patch, a little more tactical thinking is in order; perhaps you run out of rockets but still keep the Rocket Launcher in hand to ward off wary scrubs until something juicier is located.



Regarding the multitude of models currently available, we've littered this portion of the page with all the best ones, including some rather weedy battlemechs (Battroid with skins from *Macross* and *Skyfire* of the *Autobots*), Eric Cartman, the fat bully from *South Park*, a trio of rather well-endowed ladies (a skin delightfully named *Crackwhore*), a Demon called *Bauul* with a mighty staff instead of normal weapons (on the model, not in the game!), Alienesque beasts (*Xenomorph*) and even a *Dalek*! Plus, their taunts are all fantastic (especially *Bauul*'s mid-air conjurings!)



Watch for Gamers' Republic staff online just waiting to frag your ass!



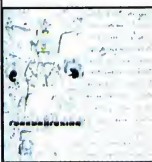
The Gamers' Republic staff are very much fans of *Quake 2*. That much is clear. However, you'll be pleased (and perhaps more than a little worried) to learn that some of us brand ourselves as *Quake* fanatics: hence Jeremy Corey's Q2 tattoo. Oh yeah, we're serious about *Quake 2* all right...

With models like "Xenomorph", "Crackwhore", and the infamous Dr. Who robot "Dalek", *Quake*'s completely out of control!

Einhander - Kenichiro FukuDigicube
SSCX100015

If you've played the game it goes without saying; buy the soundtrack. If you haven't played the game, you should do so right away and then... buy the soundtrack! Square have made quite sure that their first shooter is endowed with inspired music and indeed it is. Quality soundtracks are as much a part of the Square tradition as scratchy battle samples, and *Einhander* helps drive that point home with 29 space-age selections composed, arranged and produced by Kenichiro Fuku. An inspired journey through techno/electronic based game mania, there's ample doses of operatic ambience, *Bladerunner*-like background chants and a computer generated cacophony so intense as to force any carbon based life-form to move at excessive speeds. Drive carefully.

Dave Halverson

Funkungfusion - VariousNinja Tune
ZEN CD33

Home to *Coldcut*, *DJ Food* and the *Herbalizer*, Ninja Tune bring us their latest double-album featuring some truly excellent, if not bizarre, musical works. Almost experimental at first glance, this release contains some fantastic tunes. As the name suggests, it is simply a mixture of Funk, Kung Fu and Fusion (or should that be confusion?). With Mr. Scruff's immensely weird track, *Fish*, and Funki Porcini delivering scary jazz/funk fusion with *Surge*, you might be forgiven for thinking you had woken up in an alien lounge-environment. *Coldcut* once again bring a unique sound to the album, as do *The Herbalizer* and *The Clifford Gilberto Rhythm Combination*. Containing some of the best samples and imaginative sounds of recent times, everyone who likes their music a little bit different should check it out. Remember that trout are freshwater fish and have underwater weapons.

Bryn Williams

Progression SessionsLTJ Bukem - Good Looking Records
GLRPS0001

Already one of the most famous artists of the 90s, *LTJ Bukem's* label, Good Looking Records continue to produce the most essential drum 'n' bass in current times. *Sessions* contains 73 minutes of sheer velvet sounds as Bukem mixes awesome break-beats and truly hypnotic wave-forms together, whilst spinning the vinyl like only he can. Already enjoying a massive cult following in the clubs of the UK and Europe, Bukem strings together another delightful set of tunes featuring *Intense*, *Bio-Wire* and *PHD* plus more. MC Conrad, a seasoned *Logical Progression* veteran, proves once again that no one can top his vocal skills, as he indulges us once again for the duration of the tracks. Followers of Bukem will be more than pleased with this latest addition to an already overwhelming career. Sheer class.

Bryn Williams

**HII - VDJ Honda**Relativity
1613-2

Born in Hokkaido, Japan, DJ Honda has become perhaps the most famous Japanese hip-hop deejay. And righteously so. After listening to his excellent second album *hii*, it becomes apparent

Honda has a deep understanding of the hip-hop sound despite the global distance between cultures. Proof of his reputation as a premier deejay is supported by appearances from notable guest lyricists *De La Soul* (offering the best track of the album *Trouble in the Water*), *KRS-One*, Keith Murray, the *Beatnuts* and fellow turntablists *Roc Raida* and *Mista Sinasta* (of New York *X-Ecutioners* fame), combining their skills to make this album an essential purchase for any beat junkie. With smooth production skills, rhythmic lyrical flows and solid beats, the album will remind you what hip-hop is really about: the music.

Gregory Han

Deep ConcentrationOm Records
ZEN CD33

Rather than relying upon a lyrical base, *Om's* compilation *Deep Concentration* delves into the realm of instrumental two-turntable wizardry. *Cut Chemist* (who also produced the excellent *Jurassic 5* ep) shows and proves why he may be arguably the best LA hip-hop deejay with the already classic mix-study *Lesson 6-The Lecture*. Prince Paul of *De La Soul* and *Stesasonic* fame proves he remains an innovator of the industry with his offering *DJ Prince Paul vs. The World*. Others include Parisian Eddie Def, New York's *X-Ecutioners*, and the very impressive *SF Solesides* crew. To top it off, the cd contains a bonus multimedia mixing program for both PCs and Macs which lets you lay down tracks of scratches, loops, melodies and beats to create your own musical masterpiece. *Om's* release will be sure to please almost any listener of hip-hop, and convincingly so.

Gregory Han

Nothing Lasts - Cypher 7Yikes Records
Y7774-2

Bill Laswell and fellow collaborators Jeff Bova, Alex Haas, and Joe Lambert have assembled *Cypher 7, nothing lasts*, a gorgeous voyage through modern ambient sound. This double-CD swims effortlessly between seductive waves of gentle synth and Bill's own guiding bass talents. At times it dares to be consumed by a stronger drum rhythm, changing speed and effect, then all is restored as echoing passageways - like subversive chimes - prevail. The twenty minute epics *Dead Drop* and *Ladder of Lights* off disc one, and the slightly clouded (by abstracted, enlightened breaks) *Suspicious Shaman* and *Tokyo AM* off disc two exist to be heard. Most unique, however, is the fading construction of disc two. The final fifteen tracks, transcending *Nothing Lasts*, spiralling across *Falling Backwards*, into the shifting pool of *Nadyr*, are simple, evocative bliss. Enjoy.

Mike Griffin

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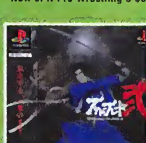
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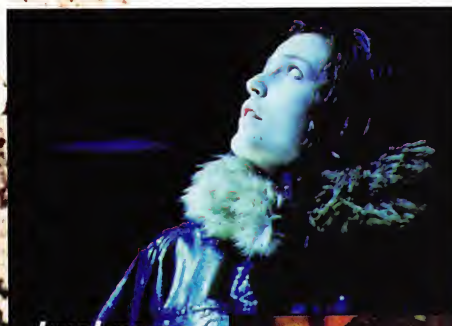
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X-FILES

Dark, mysterious, often steeped in bizarre, sardonic humor, *The X-Files* series has captured the imagination of millions of television viewers, and is now set to transport its compelling storytelling onto the big screen. In an effort to please ardent fans as well as draw cinema goers not yet initiated to the unique tone and interrelated plot developments of the show, original creator Chris Carter has attempted to craft a story that will penetrate the deep well of mystery that feeds the show, as well as interject new elements.



Investigating a bombing of a Dallas office building, FBI Special Agents Mulder and Scully are drawn into a swirling storm of questions and secrets lying in the aftermath of the crime. The answers they find will penetrate the current fog of mystery shrouding the series, revealing key plot elements as well as setting up a new labyrinth of intrigue.

Underpinning the dusky atmosphere so integral to the show's success, Mark Snow's subtle mixtures of electronic ambience and beautifully eerie keyboard textures will be present in the movie, fleshing out the edginess. With Rob Bowman directing, also a series veteran with 23 episodes to his credit, and Chris Carter's brilliant, convoluted writing teemed with the that of the equally creative Frank Spotnitz, there is no reason why *The X-Files* movie won't continue the fantastic appeal of the series—and if we're lucky, transcend it. **BRADY FIECHTER**

Rated PG-13. Opens June 19 in theaters everywhere

cine matrix

From cult movies to blockbusters, film entertainment for the video gamer



ARMAGEDDON

An asteroid the size of Texas is heading toward Earth, and you have four choices; meltdown in the heat blast, freeze in a nuclear winter, run for cover and hope it won't hit you, or send in Bruce Willis and company, to blast the mother away.

Willis plays the crack-demolition guy who, with a bunch of his fellow explosives experts, are chosen to destroy the asteroid (from the inside, because the storyline wouldn't be half as thrilling if they could just blow it up from Earth). He is joined by wise-cracking Steve Buscemi, Ben Affleck and the super-cool and understanding Billy Bob Thornton as NASA administrator.

From what we've seen (and that's little so far), this looks like an action and FX-packed feast. Whether or not the storyline is enjoyable, or even plausible, is something that has yet to be determined, but if you can bear the one-liners and "Science - The Hollywood Approach", it looks like you could be in for an extremely enjoyable movie. **ANGELA HARROD**

Not yet rated. Opens July 1 in theaters everywhere

dvd release



REPLACEMENT KILLERS

From the Jon Woo school of film comes the big screen debut for both Antoine Fuqua, as a feature film director, and Chow Yun-Fat, as a leading man, in *The Replacement Killers*; a Hong Kong style action flick with three very magical elements. 1. *Mira Sorvino*: She could stand there and talk for two hours and I'd pay to see it. 2. *Atmosphere*: Even the innards of a car wash take on a sophisticated air and the climactic back alley scene is a masterpiece. And 3. *Cinematography*: The movie is filmed beautifully with camera angles rivaling the best Jon Woo flicks. Actually, make that four magical elements. The soundtrack demands respect as well, as it keeps everything moving at a fever pitch. The genre here is hardcore action and unless that is what you're in the mood for, you may as well pass. The story, which is quite good for this 'phylum', is merely a back-drop for which the action to play upon. And play it does, with added integrity due to the presence of Sorvino who somehow manages to stand out amongst the powerful presence of Chow Yun-Fat, whom I hope we see a lot more of in the future. He turns in an excellent performance, proving that not only can he act, but that two guns are always better than one! If it is stylish, sophisticated action and reckless abandon that you desire, *The Replacement Killers* delivers. Look for it on video, laserdisc, and DVD on June 30th.

DAVE HALVERSON
Rated R.

dvd release



PLAYING GOD

Once a competent, confident surgeon, Eugene Sands (David Duchovny) is now alone, drowning in his remorse after losing his medical license when a patient dies as a result of his addiction to uppers and downers. Strung out, constantly looking for a way to numb his sorrows, Sands is found in a sleazy bar looking to buy more drugs for a quick fix. Here, in the opening scene of *Playing God*, we see Sands perform an ingenious surgery on a gunshot victim, saving the man's life. As fate would have it, the person he saves is an associate of a crime boss named Raymond Blossom (Timothy Hutton).

After rewarding Sands with \$10,000, Blossom propositions him to act as his personal physician, granting him a chance to once again practice medicine - and perhaps resurrect his spirit. Of course he accepts, and is drawn into the world of crime, where he becomes intrigued by what he sees.

Duchovny is perfectly cast as the role of Sands, wrapping the dialogue with his sardonic, mild mannerism, effectively exposing the pain of the character. *Playing God* is more than an action film, although the action is plenty. It's also an interesting story with vulnerable villains, and it looks inside their world in a way that reveals a vulnerable side. Unfortunately, so much more needs to be told.

BRADY FIECHTER
Rated R.

hbo



SPAWN: the animated series

Here's an exclusive look at the upcoming second season of *Spawn: The Animated Series*, airing Fridays on HBO. We received episodes 7 & 8, which take over right where last season left off. This doesn't exactly do anyone much good though... you see, Spawn has been reborn yet again. In other words, while I recommend that everyone witness the violent spectacle of the first season, newbies should feel free to partake in the continuation without fear. It's a whole new can of maggots.

Al Simmons must suffer through the pain of spawning through hell another time. Along with the indescribable torment comes a flurry of images connecting his broken conscience to the past. Flashes of his beloved, the final night he spent with her, and the ring, "Al + Wanda Forever"... as well as detailed, enraged recollections of his assassin, the traitorous Chapel. He returns to the plane of mortals, emerging in the ramshackled Rat City in the dead of night. Bums call to him, "Al...Al, it's O.K., you're safe with us", but the voices inside his head drown out the fools. It's all incredibly dark, perfectly moody, and beautifully animated.

Meanwhile, Jason Wynn sends Chapel to the alleyway to discover the whereabouts of the weapons that he believed were stolen from him. Damn, does this turn out to be a poor career choice for Chapel! He almost immediately encounters

Spawn, unaware of his true identity. Al suddenly flashbacks and remembers Chapel's identity and the horrid double-cross. I'm no sicko, but the subsequent beating is glorious. You'll be thanking the stars that such violence is run of the mill on HBO, because a toned-down version of this powerful, macabre scene wouldn't project a tenth of the impact that uncensored permits. Al makes sure that Chapel takes a good, long look at himself...

I refuse to spoil the next episode for you. Let's just say that Spawn begins to piece it all together while tearing everything apart, and certain powerful entities feel the brunt of both manifestations. Overall, the animation quality is superb, per usual, and Shirley Walker's stylish, brooding score compliments the sinister nature of the story perfectly. And once again, Keith David's Spawn voice-over is flawless. You must tune-in to the season premiere and absorb the chronicles of *Spawn* delve deeper and deeper towards the truth...

MIKE GRIFFIN

Mature audiences only



theatrical release



SMALL SOLDIERS

Move over Buzz Lightyear, the Small Soldiers are here, with stacks of attitude, and very, very big weapons.

Directed by Joe Dante (*Gremlins*), the movie blends live-action with very impressive-looking CG (*Industrial Light & Magic*...who else?), plus cool animatronics created by the *Jurassic Park* team. It tells the story of what could happen if action figures took their jobs a bit too seriously.

War breaks out between the Gorgonites, a motley crew of monstrously deformed toys, and the Commando Elite, led by Major Chip Hazard (voiced by Tommy-Lee Jones). The movie also stars Phil Hartman, who realizes size isn't everything when there's war-crazed plastic figures running around your house.

Look out Suburbia, USA... these are the most advanced military toys ever created, and they're about to start war in your back yard. ANGELA HARROD

Rated PG.

Coming soon to theaters

EXPERIENCE THE SMALL SOLDIERS

If you can't wait for the movie, then get along to Universal Studios Hollywood for "Small Soldiers - Behind the Scenes Experience".

You'll get an inside look at the amazing special effects and techniques used in the movie, take a tour of the sets, pose for photos with the characters, 'take part' in the film with blue screen and even create your own 'Small Soldier'. ANGELA HARROD

Opening June 29th

I GUESS I DIDN'T KNOW IT...

The Crystal Method, a.k.a. Scott Kirkland and Ken Jordan, originally hail from the gambling capital of America, Las Vegas. They exploded onto the scene back in 1996 with cult hits such as *Keep Hope Alive* and *Now is The Time*. With a hard, eclectic melange of powerful break-beat rhythms, intelligently subdued vocals, and trippy analog synth layers, *The Crystal Method* quickly established themselves as the cutting edge US "electronica" group. This was a time of UK dominance in the genre, and their unique, instantly accessible style caused many a Brit to stop and pay close attention. 1997 was a benchmark year for the LA-based duo. Their undeniably fearless presence on the stage and massive touring schedule in support of the *Vegas* album thrust them forth into the public spotlight. Hits like *Busy Child*, *Trip Like I Do*, and *Comin' Back* can be heard everywhere, from MTV's *Fashionably Loud* to trailers for blockbuster films like *The Replacement Killers*. Years spent in the studio and on tour, trading roles as engineer, producer, and songwriter, it seems as though the independent duo have stumbled upon a sound that excels in this day and age. Their eventual involvement with the gaming industry seemed only natural...



By Mike Griffin

the crystal method

Now pushing n2o to a new high

CAN YOU TRIP LIKE I DO?...

The Crystal Method and *N2o*: a marriage made in gaming heaven. Gaming companies have always made valiant attempts at synergy between on-screen action and in-game music. As images flash before a player's eyes, with gameplay dictating every physical reaction, the sound that accompanies must evoke a sense of immersion. *N2o* is a virtual assault of the senses. Blinding colors, amazing speeds, incomparable effects, and amazing frame-rates attack in ever-changing psychedelic patterns. Now, imagine a shooter this visually intense, but with the soundtrack of a game like *Jet Moto*. Futuristic designs and cheesy guitar licks? No thanks. Post-modern polished breakbeat techno? Oh yeah. *The Crystal Method* have unknowingly crafted the perfect 3D shooter soundtrack.

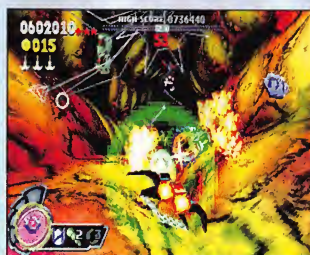


BUSY CHILD...

I applaud Fox Interactive for choosing *The Crystal Method* as *N2o*'s soundtrack artist. Not only are the regular album versions of *Keep Hope Alive*, *Busy Child*, *Cherry Twist*, *She's My Pusher*, and *Trip Like I Do* on board, but amazing exclusive remixes also bless the soundtrack. *Uberzone* has remixed *Busy Child* into



cool clusters of drums and samples. It's a unique style that's closer to a hybrid of trip-hop than break beat. Great energy. Orlando's talented *AK1200* offers up a jazz infused drum 'n' bass rendition of *Keep Hope Alive*. It's quirky, it's rich, and it fits *N2o* like a glove. Front BC (that's Mr. Haines to you and me) dices-up *Comin' Back* with his unique *Comin' Twice* remix. Boomerang-like deep bass-lines and mellow beats facelifit the track perfectly. From a gamer's point of view, however, the *Industrial Cloud* remix of *Now is the Time* can't be beat. With fast, thickly layered electro, and adrenaline-pumping drum breaks, you'd almost swear that *N2o* was in sight throughout every moment of its creation.



THERE IS HOPE...

Every now and then, game companies make good decisions, sign on cool artists, and let them do what they do best without pointless interference. *The Crystal Method* have provided Fox with the ideal soundtrack for *N2o*. In turn, Fox has given the group some excellent exposure in the gaming community. And the end result? Gamers enjoy an intense soundtrack while playing a cool action game. Hey, we don't ask for much...



Ino-oot-ne en-t

the crystal method

incoming operations manual, marine!

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trespasser



Despite some minor plot discrepancies, *The Lost World* set a new standard for reptilian special effects, and with this in mind, DreamWorks Interactive are nearing the completion of their own dinosaur masterpiece, *Trespasser*. Featuring astoundingly detailed environments, a sickeningly realistic physics engine and perfectly motioned (not to mention horrifically vicious) dinosaurs, we explore deep into this potentially amazing title with one overriding question. Can a game with this much graphical prowess (these are all in-game shots) play as well as it looks?

Next issue also promises to be even more packed, what with our extensive coverage of the E3. We're set to locate and film every single new game shown, both in front and behind closed doors. Of course, this may result in wrestling with security guards and gatecrashing behind-the-scenes events, but the results are sure to be worth it.

Finally, along with a host of other surprises, Gamers' Republic visits Naughty Dog to talk long and hard about *Crash Bandicoot 3*, including revelations on the new (and secret) gameplay features... Stay tuned for further information. Game Over.

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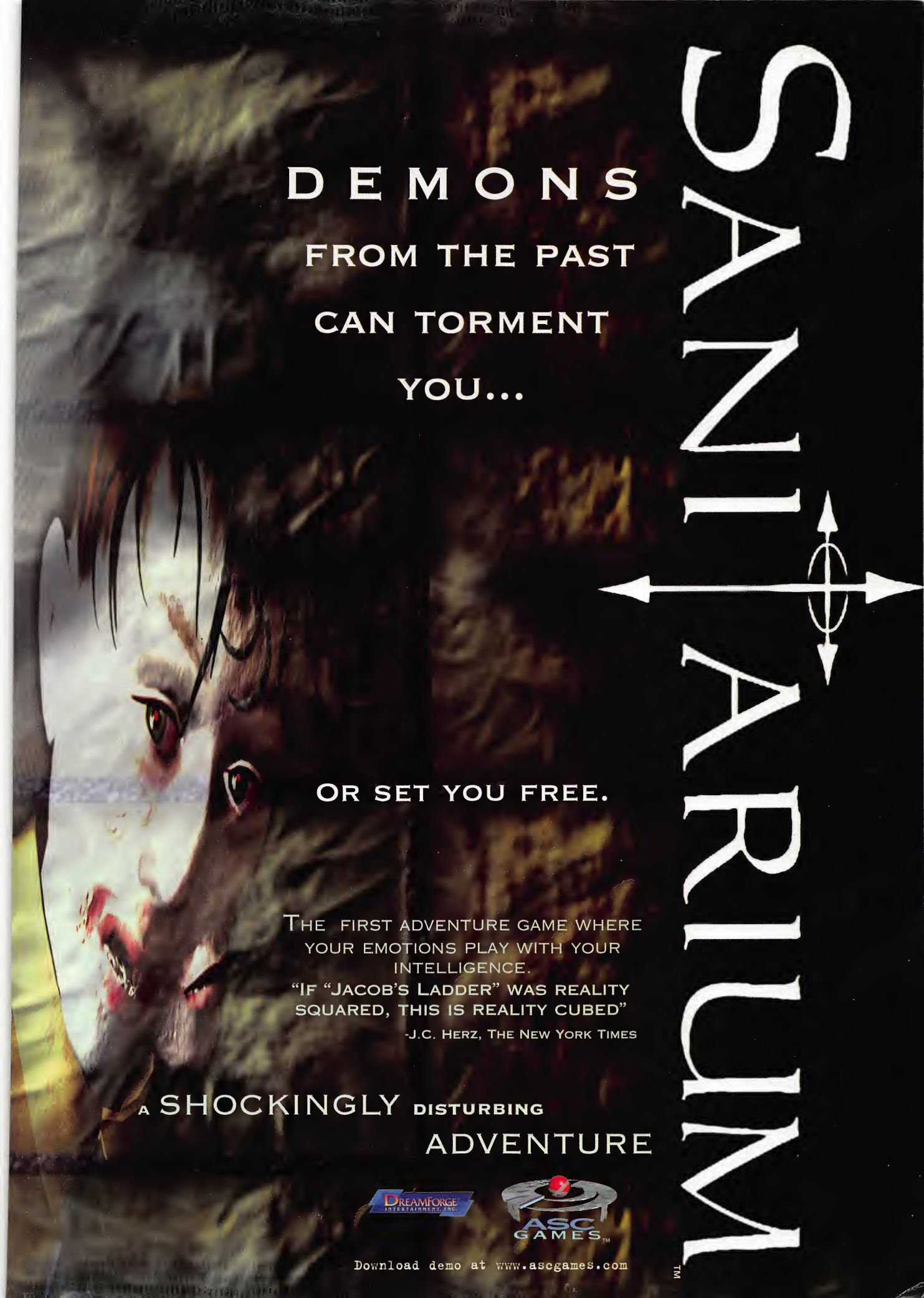
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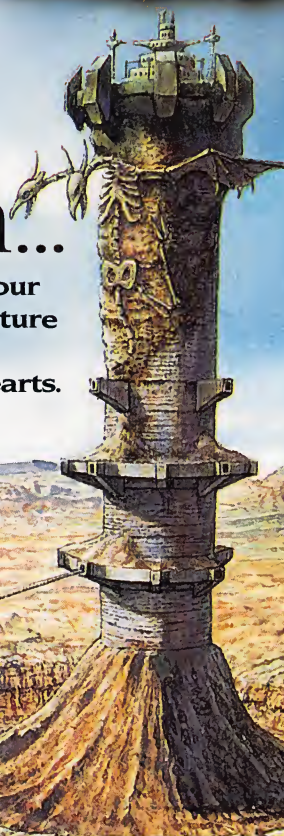
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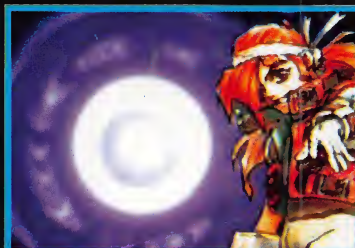
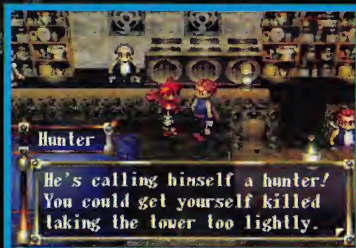


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